

OCTOBER 24, 2005

IN THESE TIMES

REP. BARBARA LEE ON THE
PERMANENT OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

WELCOME TO NEW ORLEANS

BUSH TAX CUTS AT WORK

DAVID SIROTA REPORTS

ALSO:

DISASTERS: NATURAL AND SOCIAL ERIC KLINENBERG

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“

New Orleans had a great period, and now it is going to sink into some kind of glorious mess ... People will come to gamble in the casinos and feel the grandeur of what was once there, which the tourist bureau will do its best to recreate.

”

ANDREI CODRESCU, *NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE*, SEPT. 11, 2005



Editorial

The New New Orleans By Joel Bleifuss

One storm has passed, but another looms. New Orleans stands on the frontlines of what is shaping up as a battle over visions of America.

Administration officials have tripped over their tongues, poll numbers have fallen and the media has developed a bark. But let's not underestimate the Bush administration's ability to craft a silk purse from a sow's ear: Karl Rove will eventually get everyone on message.

What is the message? Ooze compassion. Much as Lewis Carroll's gluttonous Walrus told the oysters he was eating, Bush effectively said to the people of New Orleans, "I weep for you. I deeply sympathize."

But behind the tears of compassion, \$5,000 handouts and talk of uplift is a gleam in the eye of more forward-thinking Republicans. In the same way that 9/11 provided cover for an invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration seems poised to turn Katrina to its advantage. Attention all vultures: Opportunity knocks.

The big oyster: New Orleans, where more than 7 million visitors each year generate more than \$7 billion in revenue. As a new frontier for real estate developers, the city has potential as an urban playland of theme parks, hotels, convention centers and casinos. Thanks to hurricane cleansing, vast tracts of New Orleans Parish are free of huddled masses and it's a buyer's market: Property is changing hands in New Orleans

at a record rate.

Should this come to pass, the new New Orleans will need its service employees—there will be more toilets to clean, dishes to wash and beds to make. And while this army of low-wage workers won't be able to afford the condos sure to rise from the mire, thanks to President Bush they won't be homeless. They can homestead—put down stakes in one of the trailer-park townships that will be established in geographically convenient locations. The *New York Times* reports, "FEMA is thinking like the onetime Soviet planners, mapping out new towns that in some cases will have as many as 25,000 mobile homes, spread across hundreds of acres." Perhaps they'll double as rafts when the next hurricane hits.

While that free enterprise dream of a reborn New Orleans has yet to become reality, the administration has used the disaster to incubate a number of pet proposals. It set up a school voucher system for displaced children—a friendly payback to the religious right. It suspended the Davis-Bacon law requiring federal contractors to pay their workers prevailing wages—a move that increases the profits of contractors like Halliburton and Bechtel, which,

as in Iraq, have been rewarded with no-bid reconstruction contracts. It exempted industries in hurricane-affected areas from EPA regulations, allowing corporations to avoid the costs of pollution control. And it plans to give \$2 billion in tax breaks to corporations who do business in the Gulf Opportunity Zone, making redevelopment all the more lucrative.

Following Katrina, Rep. Richard Baker (R-La.) went off the compassion message when he was overheard telling lobbyists, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."

Back on message, Bush said, "This poverty has roots in generations of segregation and discrimination that closed many doors of opportunity."

That's undisputedly true, but in a strange permutation of racial politics, the color of the skin of those displaced by Katrina has been used to deflect attention away from a system of class oppression that is an equal opportunity disabler.

While race certainly has its role, American poverty is most firmly rooted in a class system—a system maintained by an economy that allocates the wealth of society to those who already have the most. One of the ways that wealth is created is to ensure that unskilled workers are not paid a living wage.

"We will renew our promise as a land of equality and decency," said Bush, perhaps envisioning a chicken in every pot in the trailer park. His new New Deal for the new New Orleans. ■

Letters

Stereo Laborer

I was sorry to hear about Jimmy Weinstein's death ("The Man, the Magazine, the Legacy," August 1).

He was a friend of my parents in the early '50s. I don't know where they knew each other from, but as my father was a left-wing Jewish science student at Cornell, that would be the logical place.

When my parents got married in 1952, Weinstein, who was then working in an electronics factory, gave them a hand-built mono hi-fi system—turntable, preamp, power amp and speaker. According to family legend, it was constructed entirely out of stolen parts, except for the 12-inch Jensen speaker, which was too big to smuggle out of the plant.

I still have the speaker, which I rewired to use as a guitar cabinet. The turntable, which I inherited in 8th grade, had an extremely heavy cartridge, and was thus responsible for destroying my 45s of the

Rolling Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash," Otis Redding's "Dock of the Bay" and the Chambers Brothers' "Time Has Come Today."

Steve Wishnia
New York

Three Is Better Than Two

It is ironic that *In These Times* would quote Eugene Debs, the five-time Socialist candidate for president, who said "progress is born of agitation" on the same page in which Joel Bleifuss maintains that James Weinstein believed that third parties have never succeeded and can't succeed in the future ("What Jimmy Taught Us," August 1). Three rebuttals come to mind.

1.) The Republican Party was born as a third party in 1854 and had succeeded by 1860.

2.) Most of the successful progressive legislation of the twentieth century was originally championed by third parties. Only when ideas begin

to resonate with average citizens have Democrats responded and adopted some of these ideas as their own.

3.) The most loaded phrase is "because of institutional barriers," which you seem to accept as being permanent and immutable. It is the contention of the Green Party of the United States that the two-party duopoly—with its commitment to maintaining the status quo by keeping out third parties with numerous roadblocks to building alternative parties—is a big part of the problem.

We push for electoral reforms, such as instant runoff voting and proportional representation, a change in laws that define corporations as citizens and for an end to corporate contributions in the political arena.

Without major changes to these "barriers," this country and the world are doomed to legislation written by politicians in the service of corporations.

David McCorquodale
Treasurer, Green Party
of Delaware
Wilmington, Del.

Joel Bleifuss, in "What Jimmy Taught Us," lists three reasons why third parties have failed. The third—"because of institutional barriers, third party political efforts in the United States have never suc-

ceeded, which means the Democratic Party is the only viable vehicle for electoral action"—is hardly self-evident. Whether or not "success" is the ultimate goal of

politics, I think it would be better to work on root causes and institutional barriers, rather than apply a used bandage that has failed to heal the wound—or even stick—numerous times in the past.

When it comes to electoral reform, it seems that the Democratic Party has been the foremost institutional barrier.

The Democratic Party claims to be the champion of the worker, the environment, the poor and disaffected, the farmer, the immigrant. Looking more closely, one might find that the only labor the Democratic Party represents is union labor and the only farmers it represents are factory farmers. In other words, organizations that look, from the top down, remarkably similar to those awful, heartless, mercenary, unethical, and uncontrollable corporations the Republicans proudly represent.

Benjamin Greaves
Seaside, Ore.

JOEL BLEIFUSS RESPONDS

The Republican party grew out of the disintegration of the Whig Party, it did not supplant it. As James Weinstein writes in *The Long Detour*, "The third party mystique survives because leftists think only in terms of European ideological politics



WELCOME SENIOR EDITORS

We are pleased to announce that *In These Times* has received a grant to fund four new senior editors. Over the next year, Lakshmi Chaudhry, Christopher Hayes, David Sirota and Silja J.A. Talvi will be contributing regularly to these pages, joining our current roster of senior editors, which includes Craig Aaron, Pat Aufderheide, Susan Douglas, David Moberg, David Mulcahey, Salim Muwakkil and Kurt Vonnegut.

You've read their work in *In These Times* in the past and we look forward to bringing you more great reporting, writing and analysis in both the magazine and on our Web site, www.inthesetimes.com.

We kick off their tenure here with a cover story from David Sirota. Stay tuned for more announcements as we continue to expand and deepen our coverage.

and do not examine the nature of their own system seriously. Also the appeal of a 'party' of one's own—one built around a clear set of principles, with general agreement on program, and not subject to the necessity of compromisers with non-true believers—is very comforting.”

As soon as the United States implements a system of proportional representation, something this magazine has long supported, *In These Times* will jump on the third party express. Until then we want no part of the train wreck. As for the Democratic Party, we will take our inspiration from members of the Progressive Caucus like Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), who writes the House Call column for this issue (p.13).

Dimes, Dollars and DU

I appreciated Dave Lindorff's "Radioactive Wounds of War," (Sept. 19) because I believe DU should be banned from use as a weapon. But I take issue with Lindorff's statement that "The Pentagon has expanded DU beyond tank and A-10 shells, for use in bunker-busting bombs, which can spew out more than half a ton of DU in one explosion," which, in turn, leads him to state that "in the current wars in Afghanistan and, especially, Iraq ... more than 1,000 tons [of DU have

been] used in Afghanistan and more than 3,000 tons used in Iraq."

To put it bluntly, there is no documentary nor peer-reviewed forensic evidence to confirm that DU is being used in bunker-busting bombs. This claim is an extrapolation by some activists from the speculations of others. The Pentagon categorically denies it, and, in its October 2003 report, "Environment in Iraq," the U.N. Environmental Programme noted that "There is currently no evidence that missiles or bombs used during the war—particularly the AGM 86D CALCM hard target penetrators [153 were used] or bunker-busting bombs—contain DU." Only by assuming otherwise can one conclude such high amounts of DU have been used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In reality, the most comprehensive estimate to date of DU use since 2003 in Iraq—based on known DU weapons systems and Pentagon and other government statements—is less than 200 tons. This is still a large and dangerous amount, but we should not be confusing dimes with dollars. As a long-time anti-nuclear activist, I've learned that outsiders seeking justice can only hope to change government policy by having truth on our side. We abandon credibility and will be dismissed in the halls

of power when we present unsupported speculation as scientific fact.

Beyond the issue of credibility, the case for any hazard is better made by presenting proven numbers, along with evidence of any adverse effect. If we claim it takes a dollar to do a dime's worth of damage, we're conceding a big point on dosage.

Jack Cohen-Joppa
Tucson, Ariz.

THE EDITORS RESPOND

More extensive research has led us to agree with Cohen-Joppa that expanded use of DU by the Pentagon cannot be confirmed. We regret the error.

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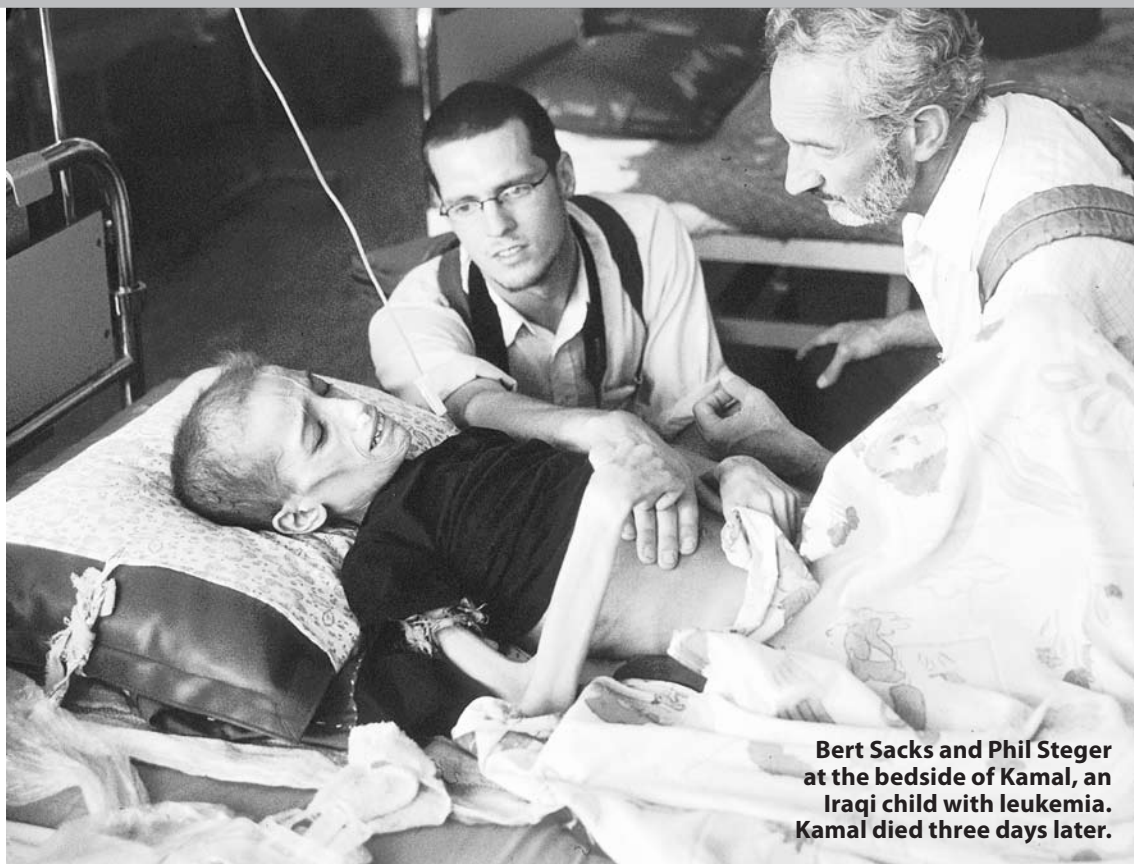
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**Bert Sacks and Phil Steger
at the bedside of Kamal, an
Iraqi child with leukemia.
Kamal died three days later.**

ALAN POGUE/TEXAS CENTER FOR DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Muzzled Voices

A federal court decision forces Voices in the Wilderness to disband. By Erin Polgreen

AFTER 10 YEARS OF DELEGATIONS, PEACE activism and non-violent protest, Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness (VitW) was silenced on August 12, when a federal judge ordered the group to pay a \$20,000 civil penalty for delivering medical supplies to Iraq without a permit.

Founded in 1995, VitW sought to openly violate and protest the economic sanctions against Iraq. The group spearheaded more than 70 delegations to the country, bringing children's antibiotics, blood bags and over-the-counter medications to people in need, despite numerous warnings from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of Treasury.

The judge's decision concluded an eight year battle over charges of sanction violations. The dispute entered the courts in 2002 after VitW's continued

refusal to adhere to the sanctions. At this point, OFAC imposed a \$20,000 civil penalty. In place of paying the penalty, the group submitted 20,000 Iraqi dinar—about \$13.61.

"We wanted to show what little worth the dinar [had] under sanctions," says the group's founder and co-coordinator Kathy Kelly.

The August ruling annulled a counter-claim filed by VitW on September 26, 2003, which argued that the sanctions did not apply because the group was involved in humanitarian acts—even though they could have applied for permits to make the deliveries legal.

"Other groups were working through government channels and [the deliveries] would be delayed for two to three years," says Danny Muller, who co-coordinated delegations and protest activities

Indecent Consolidation

Republicans seeking to please both corporate media donors and moral majoritarians now face a quandry: A new study by the D.C.-based Center for Creative Voices in Media and Fordham University Professor Philip Napoli suggests that the ownership concentration of radio stations has increased concurrently with the amount of "indecent" programming.

Between 2000 and 2003, the four largest broadcast radio giants, including Clear Channel and Viacom, accounted for 96 percent of the indecency fines levied by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) against programs like "The Howard Stern Show."

"Our research suggests that increased indecency is an unintended consequence of the deregulation of media ownership," says Jonathan Rintels, Creative Voices' executive director. He suggests that the solution lies not in restricting speech, but in greater media diversity and increased local and community programming.

The Telecommunications Act passed by Congress in 1996—now up for reconsideration—paved the way for media giants to consolidate without restriction. In the years that followed, public backlash against programming that viewers deem indecent has been on the rise. And legislators have responded by suggesting increased FCC fines. Creative Voices and others are concerned that such a narrow approach ignores the structural forces that generate commercial programming.

Media critic Norman Solomon thinks the link between media consolidation and indecency will not be easily uprooted by Congress in the coming years. He believes that even if FCC restrictions limit offensive broadcasts, corporations and commercial programmers will find new ways to incorporate the salacious content that attracts viewers and pumps up ad revenues. His argument against consolidation is that it's anti-democratic. "Media should include content that offends people," he says. A broader range of options would allow viewers to both engage with and control their own media choices.

—Saleet Wolf

for VitW from 1998 to 2004. "We didn't want to wait."

The lawsuit was further complicated because VitW is not a legal entity. Though the group is considered an NGO, it has never filed any paperwork with the government to declare itself. "We are a group of committed individuals," says Kelly. "Legally speaking, we don't exist."

The courts weren't swayed by that argument. While unable to comment on specific penalties levied against VitW or other individuals, Molly Millerwise, a spokesperson from the U. S. Department of Treasury says, "Our economic and trade-based sanctions are in place because of the national security or economy threat the target poses towards the United States and the American people. It is the responsibility of all U.S. persons to abide by U.S. law, and those choosing to violate the sanctions may face civil and criminal penalties."

But during several of their court hearings, VitW repeatedly asked why humanitarian organizations were prosecuted while companies that broke sanctions for profit were not fined or penalized. "It's incredible that [OFAC] has pursued fining a relatively small number of people, but companies are untouched," says Jeff Severs Guntzel, who traveled to Iraq with eight VitW delegations from 1998 to 2001.

Two of those companies include Texas-based BayOil and Connecticut-based Odin Marine, Inc. In an open letter to Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), chair of the U.S. Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations on Iraqi Oil Allocations, Kelly decried the actions of these companies and asked why they hadn't been penalized while humanitarian organizations were. "OFAC told your Subcommittee ... that it was up to the U.N., not the U.S., to police compliance with sanctions," wrote Kelly. "OFAC seems to have had a different point of view regarding humanitarian groups that traveled to Iraq."

Severs Guntzel called the ruling "ridiculous, given all we know about the conditions of Iraqis under sanctions." A typical delegation, according to Severs Guntzel, would bring medicine to the country, tour the most need-affected areas of Baghdad, meet with U.N. and U.S. officials, and travel into the countryside in an "attempt to take in Iraq, as best we could, under a dictatorship."

Those delegations continued through the invasion of Iraq but stopped in early

2004 when the situation on the ground made it too dangerous for VitW to continue its work. After members of NGOs that VitW worked with were abducted and, in some cases, killed, the group pulled its members out of Iraq in March 2004 and refocused its efforts on peace activism and education in the United States.

Those efforts have met a roadblock. Because the court's ruling gave authorization for the collection of the civil penalty, VitW decided to freeze its own bank account and is no longer accepting any donations made out to "Voices in the Wilderness." Kelly says the group took these measures to keep funds donated for humanitarian purposes from being used to support an administration she calls "inhumane and immoral."

"We are sending any checks back uncashed," says Kelly.

Several individuals associated with the group have also been charged with civil penalties for "travel-related" transactions. In 1998, VitW and several individuals received a "prepenalty notice" from OFAC that outlined \$160,000 of penalties that could be charged against the group and four other delegates.

Bert Sacks, a retired engineer from Seattle, was penalized \$10,000 in 2002 for bringing \$40,000 worth of medical supplies to Iraq in 1997. Sacks refused to pay, and instead raised \$10,000 for humanitarian purposes in one week. He also filed suit against the government, asking for a reversal on the grounds that the economic sanctions were a violation of the Geneva Convention and the Genocide Convention. A federal judge upheld the fine, but Sacks has appealed to the 9th District Appellate Courts.

"A policy that leads to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children is criminal," says Sacks.

While no delegations are currently planned, VitW will continue to work with the Iraqi people under their new name, Voices for Creative Nonviolence. The group has several protest activities planned, including a hunger strike protesting IMF and World Bank policies and starting a language immersion program in Jordan for students.

Despite the risk of up to 12 years in prison, Kelly says that VitW will not pay "one penny or dime" of the civil penalty in a "conscientious objection to the utterly ruthless policies of war criminals in power." ■

APPALL-O-METER

3.1 Extra Credit

Keith L. Snyder is an educator with a difference. The social studies teacher at Southern Lehigh High School liked to hire students to mow his lawn and do other chores around his Bethlehem, Pa., home. According to the *Bethlehem Express-Times*, the teacher made these job opportunities known around school by word of mouth. Less publicized was the fact that he liked to offer bonuses of between two and ten dollars to young men who would do their chores wearing a Speedo—or a thong.

Oddly enough, Snyder got takers. (Ah, the innocence of youth.) Oddly enough as well, Snyder saw fit to snap all kinds of pics of his incentivized work force—all of which has landed him in the soup with the authorities.

4.1 We Report, You Persecute

August was a tough month for a certain family in suburban Los Angeles, who found themselves the subjects of some menacing drive-by curiosity. As Randy Vorick explained to the *Los Angeles Times*, for weeks strangers would pass the Vorick's home and shout imprecations out car windows. Sometimes they would pause to take photographs.

"I'm scared to go to work and leave the kids home," Vorick told the *Times*. "I'll call them every 30 minutes to make sure they're OK."

The Vorick's troubles began shortly after Fox News blowhard John Loftus gave out their address as the domicile

of a suspected terrorist kingpin tied to this summer's bombings in London. That so-called terrorist, a grocer named Iyad Hilal, had moved from the Vorick's present address three years ago. Not that that particularly mattered to the cyber-winger community, who in short order had photos of the house and directions to it posted on the Internet.

(Comical aside: One enraged winger, apparently a speaker of the president's mother tongue, scrawled

the word "Terrorist" on the Vorick house.)

Fox News and Loftus later apologized. "I had no idea," Loftus offered. "That was the best information we had at the time."

5.2 Dahl and Dumber

It seems every pundit had something to say on the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, but few matched the, uh, originality of Chicago shock jock Steve Dahl. Dahl—who first made his name in the late '70s by organizing "Disco Demolition Night," a goofy White Sox promotional event that turned into a spooky white riot—has gone on to blaze new trails of broadcast assholery ever since. The disaster prompted this reflection by Dahl, as reported in the *Chicago Sun-Times*:

"I have sent away for five pounds of Chocolate Babies to act as 'floaters' in the new drink I'll be inventing this week: The Floating Corpse. ... I'm thinking Creme de Cacao, Kahlua, some rum, maybe a little cream and a floating Chocolate Baby."

—Dave Mulcahey



Witnesses to War

Military families bring the cost of war to students.

By Phoebe Connelly

AT 7:45 AM ON THE second day of school, Karen Meredith, a founding member of Gold Star Families For Peace, sat in front of a senior sociology class at Thomas Kelly High School on Chicago's south side. "I am not anti-military, my son was a fourth generation army officer," she told the class. "But I believe that this administration is not using the military in a way many of us in this country think they should."

The visit was part of the "Bring Them Home Now Tour," a combined effort of Gold Star Families for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Iraq Vets Against the War and Veterans For Peace that spent the end of August and early September crossing the country.

The group advocates immediate troop withdrawal from Iraq and demands that elected officials account for starting and supporting an unsubstantiated war.

The tour began in Crawford, Texas, at "Camp Casey"—the site of Cindy Sheehan's vigil. In three contingents—north, central, and south—the tour wended its way to Washington, D.C., for the September 24–26 mobilization sponsored by United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ). At Kelly High School, three parents of slain soldiers, Al Zappala, Karen Meredith and Juan Torres, gave presentations. Each went to a different classroom, speaking to the first three classes of the day.

Karen Meredith, mother of Sgt. Ken Ballard, spoke quietly, at times nearly drowned

out by the cars passing in the street below. "When he was killed I asked the government for a photo of his body being returned," Meredith said. "You may not know but the government doesn't let us see the caskets coming home. This administration does not want us to see that because they don't want us to see the human cost of war. If we see these caskets every night, whether we know the person or not, we can still see what is happening to this country: We're losing children."

"Ken was the 89th soldier from Iraq to be buried at Arlington," she said. "Some friends of mine called me yesterday, they were at Arlington [and] they said [the government] was clearing a whole new area—so they know there are more casualties to come."

The Gold Star Families' efforts are yet again revealing a truth that has haunted the U.S. military for decades: recruitment tactics often focus on low-income minority students to whom society offers few other options.

Al Zappala's son, Sgt. Sherwood Baker, was killed while guarding a team in search of WMDs in Iraq. After telling the story of his son's death, Zappala asked the students to consider what military recruiters offered them. "I know you have recruiters coming in here. ... I'm not saying everything they tell you is not true. But, like everything else, listen to what they say, but you have to make up your own mind," he said. "You see the recruit-



JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

ers, they come to schools like this, they don't come to schools in the suburbs, 'cause those kids aren't going to go in no army. They know you guys don't have as many options as they have, so this is where they come."

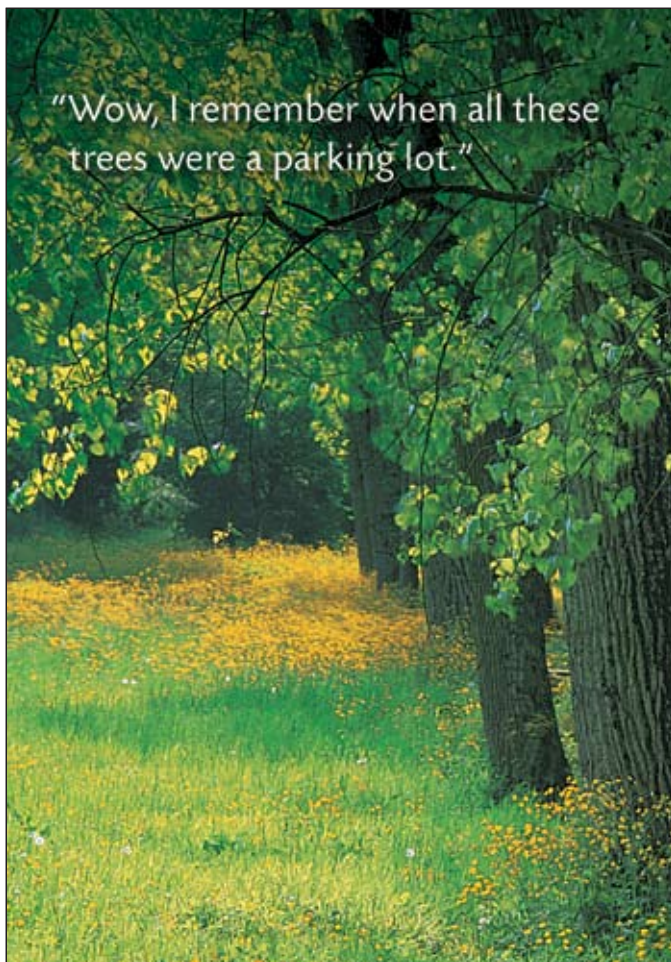
Zappala was joined in the second class by Cody Camacho, a veteran of the Iraq war from Chicago. The kids noticeably sat up in the presence of someone closer to their own age. "I don't know what else to tell you except it is a mess," Camacho said. "You have to realize that you all are the ones that are the boss. These politicians have no strength without your voice and their goal is to keep everyone ignorant and keep them poor."

Juan Torres, a Chicago resident whose son, Juan Manuel Torres, was killed in Afghanistan, spoke to Spanish-speaking classes about his son's death and his family's subsequent sorrow. Torres

and his family emigrated from Argentina to the United States. Having lost a son, he says he feels a duty to educate other parents about military recruiters. When he was finished speaking the class broke into applause.

Michael McConnell, the Great Lakes regional director of the American Friends Service Committee, helped organize the Chicago stop of the Bring Them Home Tour.

"In the past military families have had a code of silence," McConnell says. "They have broken that code and said what they really think about the lack of protection for their families and the fact that the war has not ever been justified. When the history of the opposition to the Iraq war is written military families will be noted as one of the main forces that turned the tide against the war. They are the credible witnesses to the cost of the war." ■



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Alls or Nothings

The U.S. class divide deepens under Bush.

By Silja J.A. Talvi

WHILE PUNDITS expressed shock at the fate of the poorest inhabitants in Katrina's wake, the U.S. class divide is not breaking news. But several new studies reveal the chasm separating those living in abject poverty from those with unimaginable fortunes is growing fast.

Big earners were the focus of "Executive Excess 2005," a study published in September by the Institute for Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy. The study found that the ratio between CEO and worker pay now stands at 431-to-1. In real numbers, this adds up to \$11.8 million in earnings for the average CEO compared to \$27,460 for the average worker.

The most significant revelation of "Executive Excess" concerned the growth in profits by companies involved in providing services, goods and military "expertise" to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 9/11, CEOs heading defense contractor firms have seen their pay increase by 200 percent.

Among them is David H. Brooks, CEO of DHB Industries, which manufactures bulletproof vests. While 5,000 of DHB's vests have already been recalled by the Marines, Brooks pocketed \$70 million last year, in addition to selling company stock worth \$186 million.

Halliburton, which holds 52 percent of Defense Department contracts in Iraq, has been among the biggest beneficiaries of the war in Iraq, earning \$10.7 billion since 2004, despite internal Pentagon audits that indicated that hundreds of millions were being overcharged, mishandled or misused by Halliburton subsidiary KBR.

After Katrina, Halliburton's

profit margin will increase significantly, as the company has already picked up repair contracts worth hundreds of millions—and is poised to receive even more. (Joe Albaugh, the director of FEMA for the first two years of the Bush administration, is now a key lobbyist for KBR.) That's good news to Halliburton CEO David Lesar, who saw his pay increase to \$11.4 million in 2004, up from \$4.2 million in 2003.

"It seems particularly unjust to see executives profiting personally from the horrors of war," says Sarah Anderson, co-author of the report.

While the money rolls in for Lesar and other war profiteers, the war's cost to American citizens has surpassed that of the Vietnam War, according to "The Iraq Quagmire," a study by the Institute for Policy Studies. The study finds that each U.S. citizen has paid \$727 to support the war in Iraq. The average monthly cost of the war in Iraq stands at \$5.6 billion, compared with the monthly price tag of \$5.1 billion (adjusted for inflation) during the Vietnam War.

Other industries are raking it in as well. Overall, CEO pay has increased exponentially over the past 15 years—the cumulative pay of the 10 highest paid CEOs alone has totaled more than \$11.7 billion. The report's authors conferred a special "CEO Hall of Shame" award on Citigroup's Sandy Weill, who has earned more than \$1.1 billion since 1990.

Low worker pay, poorly funded pension plans and skillful tax dodging have allowed these companies to reap huge profits. Forty-six large corporations paid no federal income taxes in 2003, despite earning a

collective \$30 billion in profits. The CEOs of those 46 companies that skirted federal taxes (led by the pharmaceutical-giant Pfizer) earned an average annual salary of \$12.6 million.

Meanwhile, according to the latest Census Bureau data, the percentage of Americans living in poverty now stands at 12.7 percent, the high point of a steady four-year increase. From 2003 to 2004 alone, the number of people living in poverty increased by 1.1 million to 37 million. And, as critics of the Census Bureau's approach to poverty data collection point out, the number is likely conservative because the figures do not account for regional differences in housing costs—nor are

they adjusted for the rising costs of childcare and health care.

American women and children have fared the worst over the last four years. During that time the number of children living in extreme poverty—defined as living with an annual income of below \$7,610 for a family of three—has increased by 20 percent to reach a high of 5.6 million.

Nationwide the poverty rate for adult women stands at 12.7 percent (compared with 9.3 percent for men). Overall, the number of poor women increased for the fourth year in a row to 20.6 million. Even women with regular employment are doing worse—real median earnings for working women fell from \$22,595 to \$22,224 in 2004.

Joan Entmacher, of the National Women's Law Center, says, "The new Census data show that for most women and their families, there is no economic recovery." ■

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Journalist Jamie Kalven characterizes his experience covering Stateway Gardens, a Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) development, as “human rights” reporting.

For 10 years Kalven maintained an unofficial office at Stateway and was a daily presence there until the buildings were demolished over the last few years. Stateway was dismantled under the City of Chicago’s Plan for Transformation, which mandates the replacement of all high-rise CHA buildings with mixed-development condo units.

His reporting will play a crucial role in an upcoming federal civil rights case, *Bond v. Utreras et al.*, in which plaintiff Diane Bond charges members of the Chicago Police Department with systematic physical abuse and harassment. All of Jamie Kalven’s documents have been subpoenaed by the city for the case. In *These Times* recently talked with Kalven about his work, available online at viewfromtheground.org.

You’ve called the dialogue around public housing bankrupt. What else needs to be brought into the discussion?

The words “public housing” lock us into an impoverished discourse that treats this as only a housing issue. Chicago’s Plan for Transformation has gone forward on that basis and so we talk about community development, affordable housing and the mechanics of the Plan in terms of relocation and support services. But the people I’ve worked with over the years, primarily at Stateway Gardens, can’t give voice to their experience or seek redress of their grievances in that language. So we need to start somewhere else.

Experience has led my colleagues and me to look first at fundamental issues of human rights violations by the state through the police department. The war on drugs, and the police brutality that it enables, is a huge ongoing phenomenon in these communities that not only shapes how they’re perceived and stigmatizes everybody who lives there but also entails real injuries to real bodies.

Why do you consider your work “human rights” reporting?

It starts with the notion of particular injuries to particular people and then treats those injuries not as a case study to illustrate a larger thesis but as something that needs to be closely attended to in itself. For example, when I examine someone living in wretched physical conditions in public housing that affects the health of their family, I pay attention to the details of those conditions, to the particularities of that family, in that unit, in that building, and then I work back toward larger patterns. Is this an isolated instance of a malfunction of an otherwise smoothly working system, or does this happen with some frequency? Is there a pattern of insults and human rights violations

that can be identified? Is this in fact ultimately what this system produces more often than not?

It’s a different kind of reporting and it starts with the notion that everybody has a set of fundamental rights that should be granted. The right end of the telescope to be looking through is the concrete injury to the individual, and then working back up toward larger patterns, the macro forces that contribute.

View From the Ground

By Aaron Sarver

So in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a time when the whole country is grappling with these issues, you can see what has been missing in the kind of reporting and discourse that we have. Journalists as well as everybody else have been stunned by the perspective that the hurricane provided on the nature of our society. But you know, what we’re seeing down there can be seen in Chicago on any day. And it’s what we’ve seen constantly in public housing over the years—a radical disjuncture between the way life is lived in one place and the way life is lived in another.

What role does police brutality play in the lives of CHA housing residents?

It’s a huge factor in the way people experience their immediate world and the way in which they view the city and civil authority. I should be clear, we’re talking about perhaps 5 percent of the police force being seriously corrupt. In no sense is our work published at viewfromtheground.org meant to defame law enforcement in general. But a few bad apples, if they operate with impunity, can have a huge impact on whole communities. Entire areas of the city will experience the four or five officers who they see every day as the face of authority. They can define your experience, not just of the city, but of your sense of home. ■

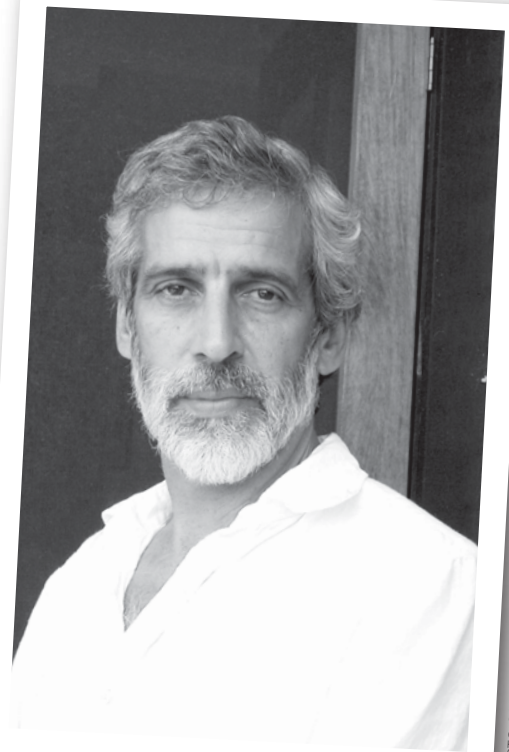


PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE KALVEN

To hear an audio interview with Kalven, visit fireontheprairie.com, In *These Times*’ monthly radio show.



Capitol Report *By Craig Aaron*

Standard Issues

How quaint the *Weekly Standard's* sniping during the "culture wars" seems now that the magazine has helped to foment the real thing.

WHEN BILL KRISTOL, FRED BARNES AND JOHN Podhoretz set out to start a new magazine, they had plenty of money—thanks to Rupert Murdoch—and plenty of political momentum, thanks to the Republican "revolution" that had recently returned the House to Republican control for the first time in 40 years. But they didn't have a title. The *American Standard* seemed to strike the right chord of patriotism and infallibility, until someone mentioned that was also the name of a leading brand of toilets.

Thus was born the *Weekly Standard*, which debuted in September 1995 with a cover showing Newt Gingrich packing an Uzi under the headline "Permanent Offense." This wasn't the last time the editors would be wrong, of course. But the early reviews were mostly positive. Even *In These Times*, in an article by Tom Frank, praised the new magazine for avoiding "the intellectual trappings of the old loony right" and not descending "into the lunkheaded ogreiness that so many expected."

The *Weekly Standard* was marketed to inside-the-Beltway power brokers and the conservative intelligentsia. It introduced a new roster of talented, provocative writers like Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson and Matt Labash, which almost atoned for launching the careers of David Brooks and Tucker Carlson.

"Conservatives were returning from the wilderness, and the *Weekly Standard* was going to lead them in rebuilding Washington, D.C., as the New Jerusalem," Frank wrote in that same *In These Times* article (back before "What's the Matter with Kansas?" had become a punch line on "The Daily Show"). "The attitude befit a publication for conservatives who were in power, not just backwoods cranks."

Even then the *Standard* was hard to stomach, with its constant railing against "liberal" bogeymen and its "thundering editorials about the sanctity of the family and the market." How quaint the sniping of the "culture wars" seems now that the *Standard* has helped to foment the real thing.

The *Standard's* 1997 cover story, "Saddam Must Go," by Kristol and Robert Kagan, is widely credited with planting the seeds for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. After 9/11, the *Standard*—amplified by the megaphone of Murdoch's media empire—started pointing the finger at Iraq. (On the very afternoon of the terrorist attacks, Kristol told NPR, "I think

Iraq is, actually, the big unspoken sort of elephant in the room today.") And as late as November 2003, the *Standard* was still pushing a Saddam-Al Qaeda connection on its cover (headline: "Case Closed").

That's a lot of fodder for the *Standard's* 10th anniversary issue, which asked a number of longtime contributors to ponder the following question: "On what issue or issues (if any!) have you changed your mind in the last 10 years—and why?" But for the most part, the *Standard*-bearers are staying the course.

Kagan—wondering what happened to all his fellow warmongers—scolds them with a quote from Thucydides: "I am the same man and do not alter, it is you who change, since in fact you took my advice while unhurt, and waited for misfortune to repent of it." (Kagan, though, overlooked the opening line of the quoted passage: "For those of course who have a free choice in the matter and whose fortunes are not at stake, war is the greatest of follies.")

In general, humility at the *Standard* is in short supply. "One thing I changed my mind about in the last 10 years is the Democrats' future," Noemie Emery writes. "Ten years ago, I believed that they had one."

In the entire 13-page section, only Andrew Ferguson really questions the direction of the conservative movement. He bemoans the "ease in which stalwarts" like Jack Abramoff, Ralph Reed and Grover Norquist "comandeered the greasy machinery of Washington power. Conservative activists came to Washington to do good and stayed to do well. The grease rubbed off, too."

Needless to say, the *Standard* crowd is doing pretty well themselves. On September 14, almost exactly four years after President Bush's famous speech amid the rubble of the World Trade Center, the *Standard* threw a star-studded (Katharine Harris! Bob Novak! Joe Lieberman!) anniversary bash. President Bush was speaking in New Orleans that night, trying to salvage his presidency from a deserted Jackson Square lit up like Disneyland. That same day was the bloodiest in Baghdad since the end of "major combat operations"—more than a dozen bombs exploded in the city, killing 160 people and wounding 570.

The *Standard's* soiree was emblematic of the entire Bush era. While the conservative elite was nibbling lobster tails and sipping champagne, the rest of the world—from the Bayou to Baghdad—was going down the toilet. ■

CRAIG AARON is the communications director of the national media reform group Free Press (www.freepress.net) and a senior editor of *In These Times*. The views expressed here are his own.



Permanent Occupation

IF YOU ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT, we will be in Iraq, in his words “as long as necessary, and not a day longer.” Members of the Bush administration, including the president, have been at pains to dispel any notion that they have plans for a permanent military presence in Iraq.

On April 13, 2004, President Bush said, “As a proud and independent people, Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation and neither does America.”

On February 17, 2005, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, testifying before the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, said, “We have no intention, at the present time, of putting permanent bases in Iraq.”

The circumstances on the ground, however, tell another story. On March 23, 2004, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on the construction of 14 “enduring bases” in Iraq. The May 22, 2005, *Washington Post* described the military’s plan to consolidate military personnel in Iraq into four massive “contingency operating bases.” According to the Congressional Research Service, Emergency Supplemental funds appropriated for military construction in Iraq for fiscal years 2001–2005 total more than \$805 million, with the vast majority, more than \$597 million, coming in the 2005 fiscal year.

Anyone familiar with the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) should be skeptical about the administration’s claims that it does not have plans for a permanent military presence in Iraq. PNAC, many of whose founders, including Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, went on to serve in the Bush administration, published a document in 2000 titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses.” It plainly cites the objective of an increased U.S. military presence in the region as a rationale for invading Iraq: “While the unresolved conflict in Iraq provides the immediate justification [for U.S. military presence], the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.”

In discussing the 14 “enduring bases” then under construction, Army Brig. Gen. Robert Pollman, chief engineer for base construction in Iraq, raised the question, “Is this a swap for the Saudi bases? I don’t know,” he told the *Chicago Tribune*. “When we talk about enduring bases here, we’re talking about the present operation, not in terms of America’s global strategic base. But this makes sense. It makes a lot of logical sense.”

No one disputes that many of the installations under construction are of a physically permanent character. The issue revolves around the policy ques-

tion of whether Iraq will be under permanent U.S. military occupation.

That is why I introduced H. Con. Res. 197, which would make it “the policy of the United States not to enter into any base agreement with the Government of Iraq that would lead to a permanent United States military presence in Iraq.”

This commonsense measure does two very important things. First, it explicitly states that the United States has no plans for a permanent military presence in Iraq and thus help to defuse the insurgency and improve the security situation on the ground.

Larry Diamond, former advisor to Paul Bremer, then head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, is a Hoover fellow and author of *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*. He writes:

We know from a variety of sources, private as well as public, that intense opposition to U.S. plans to establish long-term military bases in Iraq is one of the most passionate motivations behind the insurgency. There are many different strands to the violent resistance that plagues Iraq: Islamist and secular, Sunni and Shiite, Baathist and non-Baathist, Iraqi and foreign. The one thing that unites these disparate elements is Iraqi (or broader pan-Arab) nationalism—resistance to what they see as a long-term project for imperial domination by the United States. Neutralizing this anti-imperial passion—by clearly stating that we do not intend to remain in Iraq indefinitely—is essential to winding down the insurgency.

Second, this bill allows those who have opposed this war from the outset to define one of the most critical components of an exit strategy—namely, that our troops actually exit. The Bush administration’s unwillingness to acknowledge their intentions in Iraq, coupled with the growing disapproval of their handling of the war and the increasing public support for withdrawing our troops, offer an immediate opportunity to define this debate.

Members of Congress disagree about when, and under what circumstances, our troops should be brought home, but you are not likely to find any member of Congress who would dare to publicly come out in support of staying in Iraq permanently.

It is a question that supporters of the president should be forced to answer. If they don’t support being in Iraq permanently, they should co-sponsor my bill, and put themselves on record. It is that simple. ■

No one disputes that the military bases are of a physically permanent character. The only question is whether Iraq will be under permanent U.S. military occupation.

REP. BARBARA LEE (D-Calif.) is the most senior Democratic woman on the House International Relations Committee. In addition to authoring an alternative to the use of force in Iraq, she cast the lone vote in opposition to giving President Bush a blank check to wage war in the aftermath of 9/11.



By *Salim Muwakkil* **The Third Coast**

Accepting the Slurs

Why haven't African-American civil rights groups been at the forefront of protest against mascots demeaning Native Americans?

HOW DO BLACK PLAYERS ON THE NFL's WASHINGTON Redskins reconcile their team spirit with the racial slur that is their team's name?

The word "Redskins" derives from the genocidal practice of scalping Native Americans to earn a bounty. Certain parts of the country valued these bloody clumps of flesh and hair (red skins) as currency.

How could African-American athletes, who need only look to their own history to find similar demeaning slurs, tolerate such overt disrespect of another historically oppressed group?

This is a question not just for black ball players. Public acceptance of the Redskins mascot reveals America's race consciousness (or lack of it) better than any politician's speech hailing American democracy. What's more, how can we allow such a symbol of savagery to be the name of a sports team in America's capitol city?

These thoughts occurred to me as I pondered the recent decision of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to implement a limited ban on Indian mascots. In May, the NCAA decided to prohibit the use of American Indian mascots and logos by sports teams during postseason NCAA tournaments.

The rule, which goes into effect August 1, 2008, prohibits displays of "hostile or abusive" references on uniforms of teams, cheerleaders and bands during postseason tournaments. And beginning February 1, 2006, the group will ban institutions with such mascots or imagery from hosting any NCAA championship event.

Of particular interest are the names of 18 college mascots: Seven of the mascots are "Indians;" six are specific tribal names, like the Chippewas or the Utes; three are "Braves;" and the remaining two are the "Savages" and the "Redmen." This long standing practice of adopting Indian mascots is in itself an act of dehumanization, but one often compounded by garishly costumed performances and insulting gestures.

And although several colleges and universities have banished demeaning mascots, the impulse to stereotype dies hard in a culture that long has normalized cultural slurs. That difficulty is evident even in the NCAA ruling, which, while better than nothing, is still rather weak. For example, the group limits its prohibition to post-season games.

The persistence of such biased portrayals into the 21st century is as much a failure of progressive politics as it is a product of racial atavism. Why, for example, haven't major civil rights organizations been at the

forefront of protest against mascots demeaning Native Americans? Where are the armies of D.C.-area progressives in the battle against the name "Redskins"—a slur that repudiates the democratic principles of the nation whose capital the team represents?

The silence from rights groups is one reason black athletes have failed to see their kinship with Native American groups struggling against biased depictions. It also helps explain why an allegedly progressive hip-hop group like OutKast shamelessly promoted racial stereotypes by donning "Indian" costumes and dancing cartoonishly during a 2004 performance on the televised Grammy Awards show. Several Native American groups filed complaints to CBS about OutKast's minstrel-like performance.

The group later apologized for any offense they may have caused, but these "conscious" rappers' initial lack of sensitivity to Native American concerns was surprising. Stereotypical depictions of America's indigenous people are cultural assumptions with deep roots.

"The real issue is about power and control," wrote Cornel Pewewardy, an assistant professor of education at the University of Kansas and widely published writer on Native American issues, in a 1999 essay. He argues that negative images of Native Americans still nourish this nation's frontier legacy. "Through the politics of colonization, indigenous peoples were socialized into stereotypes that we were inferior, stupid, lazy, thereby fulfilling the need to be everybody's mascot."

Nearly 15 years ago, the American Indian Mental Health Association of Minnesota tallied the toll of these images. The group wrote, "We are in agreement that using images of American Indians as mascots, symbols, caricatures, and namesakes for non-Indian sports teams, businesses and other organizations is damaging to the self-identity, self-concept and self-esteem of our people." Since then several other groups have joined to denounce the cultural impact of negative depictions.

The reasoning that links the purpose of such mascots to their debilitating effects, likewise applies to the stereotypes deployed (and still utilized) to depict African Americans. The struggle to decriminalize the image of African-American men, for instance, is part of the same struggle to banish the Redskins.

If the civil rights community is truly serious about attacking racist stereotypes it must full heartedly join ranks with Native American groups to demand that we cease and desist in demeaning our indigenous hosts. ■

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



The Margins Go Mainstream

HURRICANE KATRINA IS BEING TOUTED AS A turning point in American politics. Much has also been made of the press' outrage over the abandonment of New Orleans. But will journalists' rediscovered mission to question authority continue?

As I noted last month, the press had already shifted into a much more querulous and combative post-post-9/11 mode that the president, who claims not to read newspapers, seems to have failed to notice. Now we can confidently refer to the post-Katrina journalism era. When the levees broke, with Bush playing air guitar, the press was waiting for him. (Not all the press, of course. When Bush made his infamous comment on "Good Morning America," "I don't think anyone anticipated the breach of the levees," Diane Sawyer didn't bat an eye.)

One notable facet of Katrina coverage was the particular relationship that emerged between what progressive bloggers were reporting and what the mainstream press covered. For much of the Bush regime, progressives have been exasperated that stories that seemed hot—the 2004 election irregularities in Ohio, the Downing Street memo, to name two—circulated widely online but were either ignored or buried in the mainstream press.

This had begun to shift in recent months, especially with Cindy Sheehan's media-savvy protest in Crawford. But with Katrina, bloggers, online magazines like *Salon*, and listservs swiftly came to serve as legitimate sources—fact finders, investigative reporters and news frame debunkers—that the print and electronic media drew from and responded to, sometimes within 24 hours. At the same time, online sources also instantly picked up mainstream news items critical of the government's response. Print stories that a national audience might not normally see found a huge audience as millions hit their "send" and "forward" buttons.

On Monday, August 29, as the levees broke and the flooding began, the press went into its usual disaster-mode reporting. As early as the next day, the AP began reporting about massive looting. By Wednesday, black people as looters was the main story on Fox, and this news frame circulated in other media as well, as did still-unsubstantiated stories about rapes and murders.

Despite the damage done by this racist frame, it could not hold. Two photos from Yahoo News soon rocketed through cyberspace, revealing a bias in reporting about hurricane victims. One from the AP showed a black person wading through the flood captioned "looting," the other from Agence France Presse of whites in the

flood waters captioned "finding food." Reporters on the scene moved to undermine the looting talk. NBC's Brian Williams noted as early as August 30, "We see what can happen when people have nothing." CNN's Anderson Cooper said, "I wouldn't call it looting. What I have seen is desperate people kind of wandering around." By September 1, the story had shifted, with a new emphasis on the victims being disproportionately poor and black. The rapper Kanye West put it simply on NBC's live Concert for Hurricane Relief on September 2: "George Bush doesn't care about black people."

Rich background material also flashed quickly across the newly empowered echo chamber. Within two days of the disaster, an August 31 story in *Editor & Publisher*, Agence France Presse, and the online magazine *Counterpunch* all cited the now well-known 2004–2005 exposé by the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. By September 2, the same story was in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Sidney Blumenthal, shrewdly anticipating the Bush denials, broke the same story on *Salon* under the prescient headline "No one can say they didn't see it coming."

Stories that would not have gotten play pre-Katrina now did. On September 1, media critic Mark Crispin Miller's listserv noted that FEMA's Web site listed Pat Robertson's "Operation Blessing" charity second only to the Red Cross. By September 6, the *Daily News* had picked up the story, and ABC followed with a September 9 exposé of Operation Blessing's dubious practices. Even the presidential mother was not off limits. In her tour of the Astrodome, the former First Lady chuckled that the setup was "working very well" for underprivileged hurricane victims—a remark captured on audio by NPR's "Marketplace" and sent zooming around the web by *Editor & Publisher* and AMERICAblog. Amazingly, the remark appeared in the *New York Times* the next day in its own special little box, and she became the subject of various withering political cartoons around the country.

Katrina was a perfect storm journalistically, but will such coverage be restricted to this particular horrific event? Or will the bridges between print, electronic and online news remain intact? The reporting of the national news organizations will answer the question. But a brief period in which the country's failed war on poverty, its institutional racism and the utter bankruptcy of a "CEO presidency" were all lead stories is testimony to what can happen when those at the margins of the mainstream media (and of our country) finally get the podium they deserve. ■

With Katrina, bloggers, online magazines and listservs swiftly came to serve as legitimate sources that the print and electronic media drew from and responded to.

SUSAN DOUGLAS is a professor of communications at the University of Michigan and co-author of *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*.



NICHOLAS KAMWAP/GETTY IMAGES

WELCOME TO NEW ORLEANS

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How the Katrina catastrophe proves that conservatives' tax cut zealotry has left America vulnerable to disaster. BY DAVID SIROTA

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH KICKED off his bid for re-election in the spring of 2004, he launched what was another in a long line of cookie-cutter conservative campaigns. There was the predictable pander to cultural conservatives with his high-profile introduction of a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. Then, there was the well-worn chest-thumping on national security and the War on Terror (sans any mention of the still-at-large Osama bin Laden).

And then, finally, there was the most familiar theme of all: right-wing economics.

Bush proudly promoted the trillions in tax cuts he had passed as supposedly helping the economy, and then went on the attack. "The tired, old policies of tax and spend," Bush said, referring to Democrats, "are a proven recipe for economic disaster."

The implication in Bush's statement is one America has been hearing for years from the right: namely, that conservatives' agenda of tax and spending cuts is not tired, but rather somehow "new," and is, most importantly, a path to success.

But with New Orleans residents still bailing water from their streets, that seemingly impenetrable axiom of American politics has crumbled almost as quickly as the infrastructure supposedly protecting our Gulf Coast during Hurricane Katrina. "Tax and spend" was not the recipe for economic

disaster—tax and spending cuts were.

This is a reality visible in the numbers. Year after year, the Bush administration insisted on massive tax cuts for the wealthy. And year after year, the White House refused to provide the funding government experts said was needed to strengthen levees, beef up hurricane preparedness and get federal emergency response ready for an onslaught from Mother Nature. America's budget surplus, built in the '90s to serve as a rainy day fund, was robbed to provide more and more giveaways to the rich. When the rainiest day of them all came, our country was left totally—and unnecessarily—vulnerable.

2001 and 2002: Denial

Casual observers wouldn't expect Mike Parker to serve as a de facto spokesman for how the Republicans' tax-cuts-at-all-cost agenda has weakened America. As a conservative GOP Congressman from Mississippi in the '90s, Parker was an outspoken advocate for giving tax breaks to the wealthy. He served as one of Newt Gingrich's lead grassroots advocates for reducing the estate tax—a levy that falls almost exclusively on the wealthiest 1.2 percent of Americans. In his 1999 run as Republican nominee for Mississippi governor, Parker made tax cuts the centerpiece of his campaign. His signature television advertisement featured him shooting pool, saying "When I say I'll fight

“ America's budget surplus, built in the '90s to serve as a rainy day fund, was robbed to provide more and more giveaways to the rich. ”

to cut your taxes, well friend, that's something that you can bank on.”

After narrowly losing that race, Parker was rewarded for his Republican service by President Bush, who appointed him to head the Army Corps of Engineers on June 7, 2001. That was the very same day Bush signed his massive \$1.3 trillion income tax cut into law—a tax cut that severely depleted the government of revenues it needed to address critical priorities. As Parker soon learned, one of the priorities that would be sacrificed was flood and hurricane protection.

Overall, Bush's first budget introduced in February 2001 proposed more than half a billion dollars worth of cuts to the Army Corps of Engineers for the 2002 fiscal year. To be sure, these budget cuts were one in a number of cuts to public priorities like health care, human services, infrastructure and job training.

PRECIPITATING DISASTERS: A TIMELINE

27 FEBRUARY 2001

President Bush proposes a \$641 billion cut to the Army Corps of Engineers, including a proposal to provide only half of what administration officials said was necessary to sustain the Southeast Louisiana Flood Control Project.

Opposite Page: Buildings are reflected in floodwaters in downtown New Orleans.

9–13 APRIL 2001

At the National Hurricane Conference, Bush FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh tells emergency officials that a major hurricane hitting New Orleans is among the three most likely disasters facing America.

26 APRIL 2001

Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.) writes an op-ed saying that “lives very likely will be lost” if budget cuts to flood infrastructure projects move forward.

7 JUNE 2001

Bush signs his massive \$1.3 trillion income tax cut into law.

20 JUNE 2001

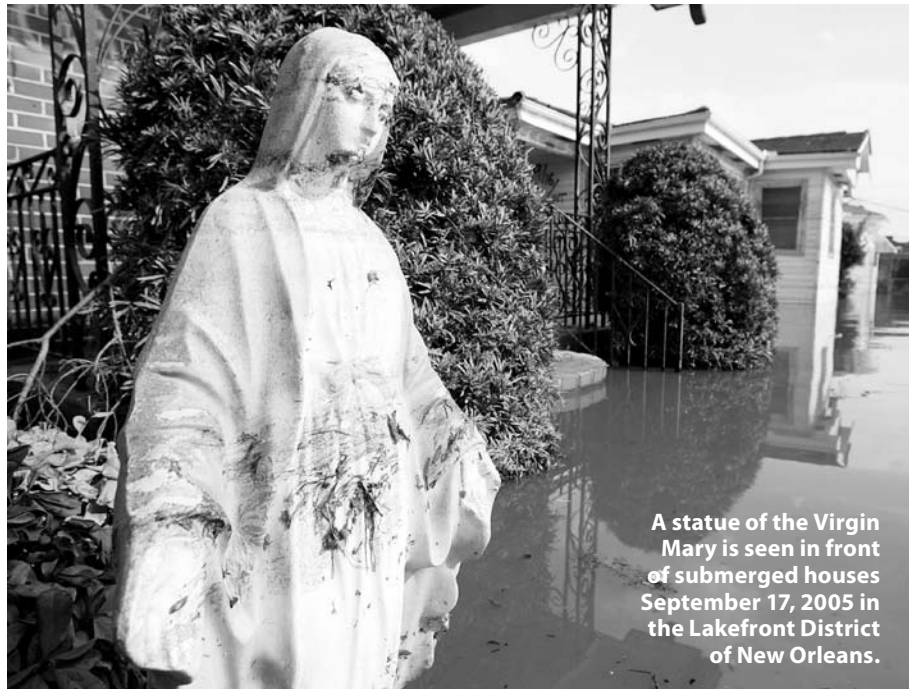
The *Times-Picayune* reports that “despite warnings that it could slow emergency response to future flood and hurricane victims, House Republicans stripped \$389 million in disaster relief money from the budget.”

And it is true that the cuts to the corps came as the agency was being legitimately criticized: Some of its projects in recent years had run roughshod over environmental concerns, and others had been unnecessarily expensive products of congressional pork. However, instead of reforming the corps and getting it back on track, the White House used the criticism as a cover to gut the entire agency. The cuts were so deep, Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.) broke ranks with her party and penned a nationally-syndicated op-ed in April 2001 saying that “lives very likely will be lost.”

Consider just a few of the specific examples: In the same budget that provided more than a trillion dollars in tax cuts, Bush proposed providing only half of what his own administration officials said was necessary to sustain the critical Southeast Louisiana Flood Control Project (SELA)—a project started after a 1995 rainstorm flooded 25,000 homes and caused a half billion dollars in damage. This 2001 budget proposal came in the same year that, according to the *Houston Chronicle*, federal officials publicly ranked the potential damage to New Orleans by a major hurricane “among the three likeliest, most catastrophic disasters facing this country.”

Similarly, less than two weeks after Bush signed his tax cut on June 7, the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* reported that “despite warnings that it could slow emergency response to future flood and hurricane victims, House Republicans stripped \$389 million in disaster relief money from the budget.”

By the beginning of the 2002 congressional session, Parker had enough of sitting in silence while these tax and budget decisions were being made. In a meeting with



A statue of the Virgin Mary is seen in front of submerged houses September 17, 2005 in the Lakefront District of New Orleans.

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

White House budget director Mitch Daniels, Parker demanded the Bush administration restore the critical money for flood and hurricane protection.

“I took two pieces of steel into Mitch Daniels’ office,” Parker recalled. “They were exactly the same pieces of steel, except one had been under water in a Mississippi lock for 30 years, and the other was new. The first piece was completely corroded and falling apart because of a lack of funding. I said, ‘Mitch, it doesn’t matter if a terrorist blows the lock up or if it falls down because it disintegrates—either way it’s the same effect, and if we let it fall down, we have only ourselves to blame.’”

But as Parker noted, “It made no impact

on [the White House] whatsoever.” In February 2002, the president unveiled his new budget, this one with a \$390 million cut to the Army Corps. The cuts came during the same year the richest 5 percent (those who make an average of \$300,000 or more) were slated to receive \$24 billion in new tax cuts.

The cuts were devastating. The administration provided just \$5 million for maintaining and upgrading critical hurricane protection levees in New Orleans—one fifth of what government experts and Republican elected officials in Louisiana told the administration was needed. Likewise, the administration had been informed that SELA needed \$80 million to keep its work moving at full speed, but the White House

4 FEBRUARY 2002

President Bush proposes a \$390 million cut to the Army Corps. The cuts come during the same year the richest 5 percent (those who make an average of \$300,000 or more) are slated to receive \$24 billion in tax cuts.

26–27 FEBRUARY 2002

President Bush’s Army Corps of Engineers Chief Mike Parker testifies before House and Senate committees that “there will be a negative impact” if the White House’s cuts to infrastructure projects are accepted by Congress.

7 MARCH 2002

Mike Parker is fired.

9 MARCH 2002

President Bush signs a \$43 billion package of business tax breaks, reducing total corporate tax collections by 21 percent.

26 SEPTEMBER 2002

Tropical Storm Isidore pushes waters to within inches of topping aging levees protecting New Orleans.

9 OCTOBER 2002

Politicians and emergency planners from 10 Louisiana parishes press the Army Corps of Engineers for emergency funding for critical levee improvements.

7 JANUARY 2003

President Bush outlines a new \$600 billion tax cut proposal centered around a plan to eliminate taxes on stock dividends.

only proposed providing a quarter of that. These cuts came even though the potential cost of not improving infrastructure was known to be astronomical. A widely-circulated 1998 report on Louisiana's insurance risks said a serious storm could inflict \$27 billion worth of damage just to homes and cars—and that didn't include industrial or commercial property. Local insurance executives estimated in 2002 that the total damage would be closer to \$100 billion to \$150 billion—estimates that now look frighteningly accurate.

When Parker headed to Capitol Hill for annual budget hearings in February 2002, he couldn't hide the truth. Under questioning, he admitted that "there will be a negative impact" if the President's budget cuts

were allowed to go forward. The White House fired Parker within a matter of days.

Some Republicans came to Parker's defense after he was removed. Then-Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) said, "Mike Parker told the truth that the Corps of Engineers budget, as proposed, is insufficient." Rep. David Vitter (R-La.) said the administration was "in denial" about the cuts. "There's no two ways about it that [the corps] are very underfunded," he said, noting that "southeast Louisiana flood control [is] our most obvious example."

Vitter was right—but he was also "in denial" about his own culpability: Just weeks before, he and his Republican colleagues voted for a brand new business tax cut package, costing the federal government \$43

billion in revenues that could have gone to fill the budget gaps Parker identified. And those tax cuts were targeted specifically to the GOP's biggest financial backers. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, the White House-backed legislation was a windfall for Big Business, "reducing total corporate tax collections by 21 percent."

Inadvertently foreshadowing just how closely tied the tax cuts and budget infrastructure negligence really would be, Bush signed this new tax cut two days after firing Parker.

2003: A new flood of cuts

In October 2002, politicians and emergency planners from 10 Louisiana parishes convened a critical meeting with the Bush administration's Army Corps of Engineers to discuss the increasingly precarious position the region found itself in. A month before, a surge from Tropical Storm Isidore—a storm far tamer than even the weakest hurricane—came dangerously close to breaching levees in New Orleans. That wasn't necessarily surprising to local residents—the *Times-Picayune* had recently completed a five-part series about how budget cuts were allowing the region's hurricane and flood control infrastructure to crumble.

At the meeting, the chairman of Louisiana's Levee Board made things clear to the Bush administration: "If [a hurricane] hit us today, we'd see more water in more places and more lives lost." If there wasn't a serious investment of new resources, he said, "then we're losing our past and our future."

The Army Corps told the levee board that the necessary improvements could cost up to \$2 billion—a large figure, indeed. But not compared to the new tax cut



Hurricane Katrina survivor Israel White, 67 and his common-law wife Kim Taylor at the Red Cross shelter September 10, 2005 in Houma, Louisiana.

MARIO TAMAYO/GETTY IMAGES

3 FEBRUARY 2003

President Bush proposes another half billion cut to the Army Corps of Engineers, including slicing about two-thirds of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Control Project's budget.

28 MAY 2003

President Bush signs his tax cut into law. Though the overall package has been pared back, the dividend tax break alone costs \$125 billion.

30 MAY 2003

The *Times-Picayune* reports that Bush administration officials announced "they don't have enough cash to pay for major drainage and hurricane protection projects under way in at least five local parishes" in the New Orleans area.

20 JANUARY 2004

In his State of the Union address, President Bush announces a plan to make his previous tax cuts permanent. The plan would cost more than \$1 trillion.

2 FEBRUARY 2004

President Bush proposes a \$460 million cut to the Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps says it needs \$27 million to upgrade hurricane protection around Lake Pontchartrain, but Bush proposes just \$3.9 million for the project.

8 JUNE 2004

The *Times-Picayune* reports that "for the first time in 37 years, federal budget cuts have all but stopped major work on the New Orleans area's east bank hurricane levees."

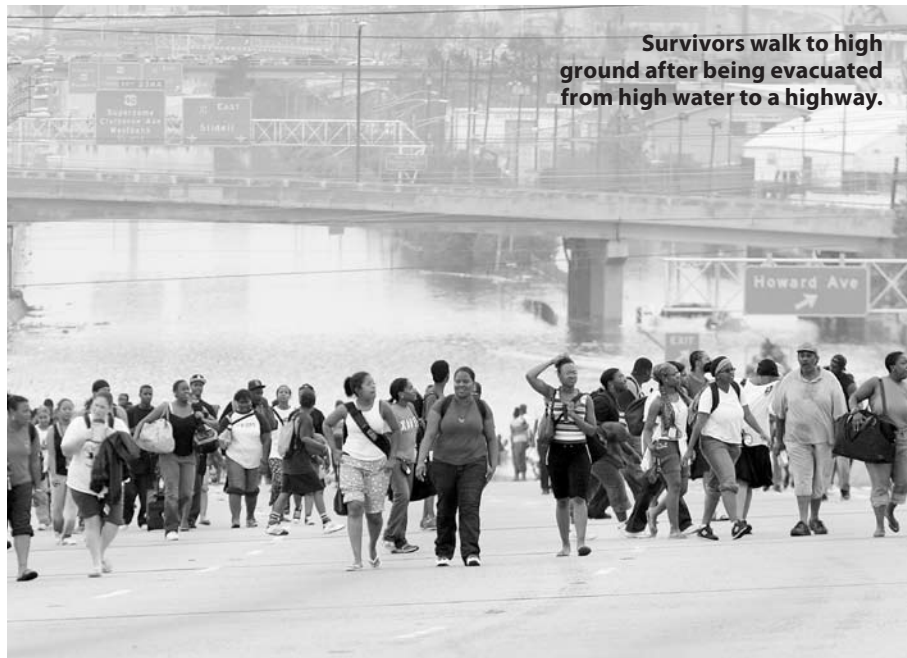
package that President Bush unveiled just three months later.

On January 7, 2003, Bush gave a speech in Chicago outlining a \$600 billion tax cut proposal. It was a plan that centered around eliminating taxes on stock dividends. “Nearly two-thirds of the tax benefits would flow to the most affluent 5 percent of households,” noted the *Christian Science Monitor*. “The top 1 percent—with incomes averaging \$1 million—would get 42 percent of the tax-free-dividend goodies [while] only 13 percent of this tax cut would go to people with incomes below \$50,000.”

For the Gulf Coast in particular, the plan was a disaster. According to the nonpartisan Citizens for Tax Justice, three out of the five states that would receive the least from the new tax cuts were Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Perhaps more importantly, the package would cost cash-strapped states tens of millions of dollars in lost revenues, because many state tax rates were tied to the federal tax code. The *Baton Rouge Advocate* soon reported that the proposal “could cost the Louisiana state treasury up to \$30 million in tax revenues”—money needed to address the state’s infrastructure problems.

Those concerned about Louisiana’s safety may have seen the new tax proposal as a reason for optimism. If the White House believed it could afford hundreds of billions of dollars of new tax cuts for the very wealthy, surely it would not plead poverty when it came to spending a few million to plug infrastructure deficiencies its own experts said were critical.

But four weeks after the dividend tax cut plan came Bush’s new budget, and another half billion proposed cut to the Army Corps of Engineers. That included a pro-



Survivors walk to high ground after being evacuated from high water to a highway.

MARIO TAMAYO/GETTY IMAGES

posal to slice about two thirds of SELA’s budget—such a massive cut that it would effectively halt projects that were reinforcing flood control infrastructure.

By the late spring, the tax and budget cut contrast came into full relief. On May 28, President Bush signed his tax cut into law. Though the overall package had been pared back, the dividend tax break alone would cost \$125 billion.

Two days later, the *Times-Picayune* reported that the administration’s own officials announced “that they don’t have enough cash to pay for major drainage and hurricane protection projects under way in at least five local parishes” in the New Orleans area. Additionally, the paper noted that “four other major construction

projects also will run out of money within the next month,” including the Lake Pontchartrain hurricane protection project and two other major levee reinforcement projects. Though Congress ultimately restored some of the money, the message from the White House was clear: Tax cuts would supersede everything.

2004: Tempting fate

The *Washington Times* headline on January 20, 2004, told it all: “Bush Wants Tax Cuts to Stay.” The article reported that even with a war, record budget deficits and dangerously crumbling infrastructure, the president would make a new, \$1 trillion tax cut plan the centerpiece of his State of the Union address.

17 JUNE 2004

The U.S. House of Representatives passes a \$155 billion White House-backed bill to cut corporate taxes.

SEPTEMBER 2004

Hurricane Ivan almost hits New Orleans. Knight Ridder newspapers report that Ivan was a very real reminder that “a direct hit by a very powerful hurricane could swamp [the region’s] levees and leave as much as 20 feet of chemical-laden, snake-infested water” in its wake.

22 OCTOBER 2004

President Bush signs the new corporate tax cut into law.

7 FEBRUARY 2005

President Bush proposes a \$708 million cut to the Army Corps of Engineers, including reducing federal funding for hurricane and flood prevention in New Orleans by \$71.2 million.

13 APRIL 2005

The U.S. House of Representatives passes a \$70 billion, White House-backed measure to eliminate the estate tax that falls on the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans.

29 AUGUST 2005

Hurricane Katrina comes ashore. New Orleans’ flood and hurricane protection infrastructure collapses. The city floods, killing an untold number of residents and causing billions in damage.

And once again, just days after the speech, the White House on February 2 released a budget with another massive cut to infrastructure and public works projects—this time to the tune of \$460 million. As the *Denver Post* later reported, “the Southeast Louisiana Flood Control project sought \$100 million in U.S. aid to strengthen the levees holding back the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, but the Bush administration offered a paltry \$16.5 million.” The *Chicago Tribune* noted that the Army Corps of Engineers had also requested \$27 million to pay for hurricane protection upgrades around Lake Pontchartrain—but the White House pared that back to \$3.9 million. Meanwhile, budget cuts forced the corps to delay seven projects that included enlarging critical levees.

These latest cuts came just as the previous ones were starting to wreak havoc. Five days after Bush’s budget was released, the *Times-Picayune* reported that “the Army Corps of Engineers doesn’t have money to keep its dozen major flood-protection projects going” simultaneously.

More bad news arrived in the spring. Gaps in levees around Lake Pontchartrain, which were supposed to be filled by 2004, would not be filled because of budget shortfalls. Corps officials told the *Times-Picayune* in April “that the lack of money will leave gaps in the structure, weakening its effectiveness and pushing back its completion date.” Worse, because budget cuts had been compounding for three years straight, “even after all the gaps are closed, the levee must settle for several more years until it reaches its final height.” By June, the newspaper reported that “for the first time in 37 years, federal budget cuts have all but stopped major work on the New Orleans

area’s east bank hurricane levees.”

“We are doing everything we can to make the case that this is a security issue for us,” Jefferson Parish emergency manager Walter Maestri said at the time, desperately begging the Bush administration to reevaluate its budget decisions. As he noted, the budget cuts meant that levee gaps would accumulate and “we’ll end up so far behind that we can’t catch up. ... And the further behind we get, the more critical the safety of the city becomes.”

But almost no one in Washington was listening. Ten days after the *Times-Picayune* story, the U.S. House passed a \$155 billion White House-backed bill to cut corporate taxes. The Senate had passed a similar bill the month before. Republican lawmakers from the Gulf Coast—who purported to be concerned about infrastructure budget cuts—all supported the new tax cut.

In September, as congressional negotiators were ironing out the final details of the corporate tax cut, Hurricane Ivan came within a hair of directly hitting New Orleans. The near miss was a bright red flag warning Washington to get its priorities straight, fast. Knight Ridder newspapers reported that Ivan was a very real reminder that “a direct hit by a very powerful hurricane could swamp [the region’s] levees and leave as much as 20 feet of chemical-laden, snake-infested water” in its wake. The city’s director of emergency preparedness said “it’s only a matter of time” unless infrastructure was quickly improved.

Yet, a month later, Bush signed the corporate tax measure into law, draining more revenue from the federal treasury that could have gone to infrastructure upgrades. The tax cut measure, of course, could have included additional provisions

“ One month after the near miss of Hurricane Ivan, Bush signed a corporate tax cut measure to which Congress had attached 170 provisions written by corporate lobbyists.”

to provide money for infrastructure improvements, if that was a priority. But it did not. Instead, Congress attached language written by corporate lobbyists to shower taxpayer cash on special interests. As the *Washington Post* reported, the bill was larded up with 170 smaller measures that benefit “restaurant owners, filmmakers, brewers, distillers, bow-and-arrow manufacturers, tackle-box companies, native Alaskan whalers, NASCAR track owners, and importers of Chinese ceiling fans.” It was about as responsible as buying a home near a forest fire zone and refusing to spend the hundreds needed for fireproofing, but shelling out thousands to install a jacuzzi and add a skylight.

2005: Catastrophe strikes

The weeks and months leading up to Hurricane Katrina were more of the same. The White House focused on a multi-trillion dollar plan to privatize Social Security, and a plan to repeal the federal estate tax.

Meanwhile, as the *Financial Times* reported, the president proposed a budget that “called for a \$71.2 million reduction in federal funding for hurricane and flood prevention projects in the New Orleans district, the largest such cut ever proposed.” In addition, “the administration wanted to shelve a study aimed at determining ways to protect New Orleans from a Category 5 hurricane.” This, in the face of a March 2005 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers that warned 3,500 dams were at risk of failing unless the government spent \$10 billion to fix them.

By the time Katrina struck on August 29, the disaster was already a *fait accompli*. Though politicians feigned shock and outrage at the federal government’s hurricane preparations, there was nothing

Continued on page 36

1 SEPTEMBER 2005

President Bush tells ABC News reporter Diane Sawyer that he refuses to reevaluate his budget and tax cut agenda. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan tells reporters, “Flood control has been a priority of this administration from day one.”

14 SEPTEMBER 2005

Even though reconstruction after Katrina will cost tens of billions of dollars, and even though the nation’s infrastructure still remains dangerously vulnerable, Republicans tell reporters they will press forward with more tax cuts.

16 SEPTEMBER 2005

In a White House press conference, President Bush pushes more spending cuts and then says that in the wake of huge reconstruction costs on the Gulf Coast, “we should not raise taxes.”

21 SEPTEMBER 2005

Despite calls from Democrats and even some moderate Republicans for Congress to consider repealing some of Bush’s tax cuts, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (D-Texas) rejects any debate on the subject. Additionally, the *Washington Post* reports that DeLay is now pushing new tax cuts.

Disasters: Natural and Social

Eric Klinenberg discusses the militarization of social services and what will be missing from any national conversations about poverty.

HURRICANE KATRINA, WHICH WAS BOTH A NATURAL AND GOVERNMENTAL disaster, has put Eric Klinenberg and his 2002 book *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* in the media spotlight. *Heat Wave* recounts how racial inequality and political neglect contributed to the deaths of more than 700 Chicago residents during the heat wave of July 1995, one of America's most important and ignored catastrophes.

In *These Times* Editor Joel Bleifuss talked with Klinenberg, an associate professor of sociology at New York University, about the parallels between the Chicago heat wave and Hurricane Katrina.

You have examined how police forces in cities like Chicago have usurped functions that were once the responsibility of public social service agencies. Do you see the same thing happening in the wake of Hurricane Katrina?

I do. Problems stemming from the militarization of social support programs are at the heart of the failed Katrina response. Beginning with the Crime Bill in 1994, all levels of government have delegated traditional social service responsibilities to paramilitary or military organizations—responsibilities that in many cases they are poorly suited to handle. In *Heat Wave* I call this an organizational mismatch, and one with serious consequences.

Take Chicago: During the '90s the city asked the Chicago Police Department's CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) program to take on a range of traditional caring functions—holding community meetings, checking in on elderly residents, helping to clean streets—effectively using the punishing branch of government to do what the giving branch had done before. The officers themselves didn't like to do this kind of work, and often they let it go undone. When Bush moved FEMA into the Department of Homeland Security, he did the same thing.

What effects does this have on civil society?

It's dangerous for democracy because it is difficult for citizens and journalists to learn about what happens inside military or paramilitary agencies that manage vital govern-

ment services. They are often designed to operate behind closed doors, and much of the work they do is classified and not subjected to public scrutiny.

Clearly this is a major trend from the Bush administration, which has tried to put as much government activity as possible out of public view. But it's also a trend we saw in the '90s, when we began shifting so many federal dollars toward policing programs in our war on crime, often at the expense of public oversight. And I worry that ordinary citizens will never have the opportunity to learn about how these programs operate in practice.

You have observed that in Chicago, the rise of community CAPS meetings was accompanied by the decline in the influence of more democratic institutions, such as the traditional Democratic Party precinct organizations.

In the article "Bowling Alone, Policing Together," I examined the ways in which Americans were coming together in the '90s around their shared interest in building community by cracking down on crime. This concerned me, since it often meant penalizing the poor, and I began to go to community policing meetings in Chicago. It was extraordinary. Citizens were attending the meetings on a regular basis, and community policing events became the primary sites for citizen involvement in local government.

Chicago has a longstanding history of aldermen and committeemen running in-

tensely local political activities for neighborhoods. They were once the brokers of projects and services, working between the city government and citizen groups. This led to some corruption and nepotism, for which Chicago is famous. But this intense form of local politics had the benefit of providing citizens with a sense of political community and a direct connection to city government.

During the '90s Chicago began to provide incentives for citizens to request services through their police departments rather than through democratically elected representatives. CAPS had developed a service priority system, wherein citizens who made their request for services through CAPS moved to the front of the line, while residents who made service requests through ordinary channels such as the aldermen's offices just waited. It was remarkable that citizens were being encouraged to channel their local democratic actions through police departments. But it was also disturbing that the program received so little public discussion.

Everybody has said that Hurricane Katrina lifted the veil on poverty. It seems that what is not being discussed is the root causes for this poverty.

It took about three days for the media to begin reporting what everyone was seeing with their own eyes, namely that the people who were abandoned in New Orleans, who were left to suffer or die, were predominantly poor and African American. It took several days for the media to say that, but once we saw it we haven't been able to stop talking about it. And that's a good thing. My hope is that we are able to sustain a conversation about the extent to which the poor and people of color are especially vulnerable to these kinds of disasters. The language of environmental justice is a powerful resource for framing these events.

But the media has not adequately covered one issue, even though we have seen the images—the specific and special height-

ened vulnerability of the elderly poor. We are reading these horrific stories about the elderly who were left behind dying collectively because no special efforts were made to evacuate them, but we have not named this special vulnerability of isolated, poor senior citizens.

We live at a time when there are more elderly living and dying alone than ever before. Our disaster plans need to be tailored to address their needs. And so do our ordinary plans for dealing with everyday life in cities.

Underlying all of this is the development of a market-model of governance that expects citizens, including the elderly and frail, to be active consumers of public goods. They are to be expert “customers” of city services made available in the market rather than “citizens” entitled to social protection. This creates a systemic mismatch of services, whereby people with the weakest capabilities and greatest needs are the least likely to get them.

One of my key points in *Heat Wave* is that disasters reveal everyday conditions that are always present but difficult to perceive. Clearly our response should be to bolster our disaster planning and prevention efforts. But we also need to be dealing with the disaster in slow motion of everyday life in the poorest and most abandoned urban areas.

So you would advocate the beginning of a national dialogue about the condition of the elderly poor?

We need to have a national dialogue about a lot of things. We hear many commentators today saying that perhaps after Katrina we can open up a national dialogue about the persistence of racial segregation, extreme poverty and inequality in American cities—even Condoleezza Rice has made this kind of remark. But I’m skeptical that we will have that national conversation about segregation and inequality in American cities. This is an administration that governs by public relations and relies on image-making projects to deflect attention from our national problems.

And history tells us it’s much easier to talk about disaster planning, improving drainage systems and shoring-up levees and building new housing, than it is to talk about racial segregation and the gross inequality that has long characterized American cities. I have very little confidence that the Bush administration and a Republican Congress are going to make addressing racial segregation and the increasing poverty in American cities a priority. My guess is that the current administration will continue to frame poverty as a cultural problem rooted in the behavior of the poor, not a structural one rooted in the economy, the structure of metropolitan governance that allows wealthy suburbs to horde resources

at the expense of cities or the endurance of segregation.

Can we expect a more meaningful response from the Democrats?

The Democratic Party doesn’t have a great, recent track record of openly addressing the vulnerability of impoverished Americans. In fact, Democrats are responsible for helping to “reinvent government” so that it became more punitive to the poor. The current levels of incarceration in the United States, particularly among African Americans, are not only shameful—they are dangerous. We are creating a society in which millions of people cycle in and out of the criminal justice system, where they are getting more stigmatized, more disadvantaged, rather than more educated or trained.

The Democrats didn’t provide much leadership during and after the great Chicago heat wave, either. The Clinton administration and Daley administration did a little to help poor residents of Chicago, but no one treated this human disaster with the urgency that it deserved.

The Republicans were especially cruel in 1995 because about a week after the disaster, while dozens of bodies remained unclaimed, Republican Senators voted to cut funding for the low-income energy assistance program, which is the only federal program that provides assistance to the poor for the home energy costs related to heating and air conditioning. They voted for that cut directly after the heat wave.

One of the most important social policies to address in the aftermath of Katrina, and the resulting rise in energy costs, is energy assistance to low-income people. It’s hard to fathom how America’s poor are going to pay for heating this winter, let alone cooling in the summer.

Perhaps Katrina will help us rethink our national energy policy priorities too. The Bush administration obviously wants to ensure that Americans can afford gas for their SUVs. If only it cared as much about ensuring that everyone can afford heating, or about the dangerous climate changes that result from our gluttonous use of oil. Imagine all the future disasters—social, political and meteorological—that we could avoid if our political parties actually advocated kicking our gas-guzzling habit. Maybe it’s time for us to demand that they do. ■



A medic checks up on Willie McCray while attempting to convince him to leave his home in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans.

MARIO TAMAYO/GETTY IMAGES

All for One, None for All

School choice policies sacrifice universal education in favor of personal freedom.

BY LINDA BAKER

PORTLAND, ORE.—ON ANY GIVEN weekday here, the residential streets are clogged with parents driving their kids away from neighborhood schools. Harboring visions of creative and challenging academics, upwardly mobile mothers and fathers head for one of the district's 20 special focus and language immersion schools, or other schools deemed superior by virtue of test scores or socio-economic enrollment patterns. As of two years ago, hundreds of Portland kids have also left their neighborhood school under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the national education law under which schools that earn a "failing" designation must give students priority transfer to another district school.

Under the district's open enrollment policy, over 35 percent of the Portland public school population now attends a school outside of their neighborhood.

NCLB and school choice policies are often touted as effective strategies to improve educational quality and close the achievement gap between low-income/minority and white middle-class students. But school choice in Portland has also exacerbated inequality, favoring savvy middle-class families at the expense of families in struggling communities. Theoretically, NCLB gives low-income students the opportunity to move to higher performing schools. In reality, the law means the kids who are left behind have even fewer resources than before.

"No Child Left Behind gives the illusion of choice, but it's really about dismantling the schools," says Elisha Williams, a senior at Jefferson High School, a predominantly African-American institution that lost more than 10 percent of its enrollment to federally mandated NCLB transfers last year. When struggling schools like Jefferson are labeled "nonperforming," Williams says, families transfer to other schools, taking per capita government dollars with them. Williams also argues that high stakes testing mandated by NCLB fuels negative stereotypes about African American

communities and encourages families to pull their kids from low-income minority schools. "That doesn't seem like choice to me, but fear," Williams says.

Williams is a member of Sisters in Action, a local nonprofit that develops leadership skills among young women of color. Last year, the Sisters launched a "Support our Schools and Neighborhood" campaign, calling on the school district to resist the NCLB mandate. The Sisters are not alone in their concerns. A growing number of parents, teachers and administrators have sounded the alarm about the impact of school choice on equity issues, as well as the long-term viability of public education itself.

"Most schools are harmed by school choice," says Terry Olson, a former language arts teacher who ran for the Portland Public School Board in 2003. Designed to retain students who might otherwise attend private schools, the district's array of special programs "has backfired," says Olson. "It's a questions of educational fairness. If families are allowed to transfer, the kids with the most involved parents and the most resources will be skimmed from lower class schools to places with 'better' test scores. Those schools lose their appeal, enrollment plummets and the schools become targets for closure."

This year, Superintendent Vicki Phillips closed five schools and another six may be headed for closure in 2006. Over the past

four years, district-wide enrollment in Portland has dropped by 4,500 kids. Although diminishing household size and rising housing costs are partially responsible for declining enrollment, demographic factors alone do not account for the exodus of families from the district.

From integration to liberation

U.S. public schools have always eerily replicated society's racial and economic stratification, but the segregation caused by school choice is especially disturbing. First, thanks to urban revitalization efforts around the country, many inner-city neighborhoods are no longer defined by race and class. And yet, as these formerly languishing communities attract new—and wealthier—residents, the schools themselves continue to lose money, students and prestige. Second, although you can't blame parents for wanting to send their child to the best school they can find, politically sanctioned choice policies facilitate, rather than mitigate the decline of urban schools.

"In the 1970s, school choice was considered a peaceful way to integrate the schools and encourage parental involvement," says Peter Cookson, Dean of the Graduate School of Education at Lewis & Clark College. "The emphasis on school choice is now personal liberty and individual competition."

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Ask some of Portland's transfer families why they left the neighborhood, and you'll hear an invocation to academic achievement and freedom of choice. Consider Victoria Guillebeau, a self-described white middle class Portland mom who used the NCLB transfer provision to put her son in a special focus arts school across town. "I have a child who is very bright," says Guillebeau, who opted out of the predominantly black neighborhood school because she didn't consider it intellectually challenging.

"I think it's great we have a transfer system that allows parents to pick schools that fit their kids better so they can grow up in a community of their choosing," says Craig Williams, another parent who transferred his daughter from a predominantly African American elementary school—with decent test scores—to Hollyrood Elementary, a program rated "exceptional" by the Oregon Department of Education. "It truly gives kids a better opportunity to learn," he says.

Miguel Salinas, a former principal and an advocate for poor and Latino students, begs to differ. School choice only works, he says, if parents have the ability to make informed decisions, an ingredient in short

supply among the families he represents. "If a student is having trouble at Marshall High School [a failing school under NCLB], just picking up and transferring is seldom going to produce a positive result," Salinas says. "I'd rather take a look at Marshall and say, 'What is the capacity here? How do we build up the community as a real partner?'"

Vicious cycles

But how do you build up community when educational policies conspire to tear it down? As Olson points out, under Portland's school choice system, two of the city's poorest elementary schools, Humboldt and King, have lost 40 percent of their neighborhood student population to other schools. The city's two richest schools, by contrast, Forest Park and Ainsworth, enroll more than 95 percent of their neighborhood population.

Elisha Williams speaks wistfully of a slate of new families who moved just across the street from Jefferson High School. "The people moving into our neighborhood don't bring their children to our schools," she says. "They take the opportunity to be part of this great area, but they're not helping to benefit our school." Jefferson, which enrolls

fewer than 40 percent of the neighborhood population, is located next to the Mississippi neighborhood, a formerly redlined district that over the last two years has become one of the hottest destinations in the city.

Under NCLB, failing schools are required to set aside 20 percent of their federal funding for student transportation costs—to other schools. Federal funding should be used to support instruction, says Courtney Jones, another member of Sisters in Action, "not to give people bus passes so kids can leave our school."

Two years ago, Portland school officials proposed a minor restriction to the school choice system that would have required parents to re-enter a school choice lottery after elementary and middle school. But those plans were axed after well-organized parents threatened to jump ship for private schools. A similar outcry occurred last spring in Seattle after school officials proposed restructuring of the decade-old school choice system. The idea was to revert to a more equitable neighborhood-based enrollment system. Around the same time, the Eugene, Ore., School Superintendent admitted his district's choice system had allowed affluent families to create a cadre of "elitist" schools, leaving most neighborhood schools "brownier and poorer."

The long-term problem with choice is that it leads down the slippery slope to the demise of public education itself. (After all, the Bush administration's initial plan was to support NCLB with school vouchers.) Nor can choice be divorced from the larger funding crisis facing public education. This year alone, the Portland district lost \$35 million in local tax revenue and federal funding, leading to a loss of 250 teaching and classroom aide positions. As funding declines, parental shopping for special programs increases, fueling a spiral of decline.

In Portland, the irony is especially bitter. A city that is nationally recognized for its emphasis on community building and sustainability houses an educational system where schools are disengaged from neighborhood, where more kids have to be driven to school and where students are increasingly sorted by race, social class, interest and ability.

If that kind of custom education sounds familiar, it should. It's called private school. ■

LINDA BAKER is a Portland-based journalist whose articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Her two children attend the Portland public school in her Sunnyside neighborhood.

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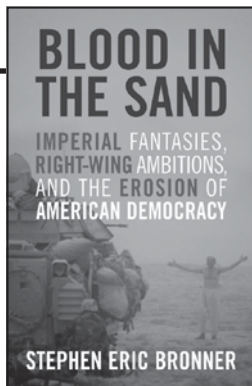
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Imminent Domination

Progressives cannot allow libertarians to lead the fight against the misuse of eminent domain.

BY DAVID MOBERG

IN JUNE THE SUPREME COURT STARTED the clock ticking on a potential political time bomb. In *Kelo v. New London*, the Court ruled five to four that local governments could use their power of eminent domain to take private property, including homes, to promote economic development. The decision broke no new legal ground, but it did stir up opposition across the political spectrum, yielding a potential windfall for the right-wing libertarian movement for “property rights.”

Under the Constitution, government can take property for “public use”—for projects

like roads, schools and hospitals—if it pays “just compensation.” For more than a century, courts have interpreted “public use” to include public purpose or benefit, like clearing a slum or helping a utility or railroad obtain right-of-way.

Over the past half-century or more, local governments have used eminent domain to promote local economic development, creating more jobs and generating needed revenue. While everyone agrees that government can’t arbitrarily transfer one owner’s property to another owner, the controversy arises over what

kind of public benefits, if any, can justify such a transfer. From both left and right, critics have accused government of abusing its power of eminent domain by taking homes and small businesses from the less affluent or less powerful and transferring them to big corporations—much as Detroit did in 1980 when it razed the working-class Poletown neighborhood and displaced more than 3,400 people to clear land for a new General Motors factory. On the other hand, it’s rare when eminent domain is even proposed to take over, say, a factory being shut down by a

corporation and turn it over to community-worker ownership.

In *Kelo*, the court ruled that the economically depressed city of New London, Conn., had the power to take and pay for the property of a group of homeowners for a planned development that included a waterfront conference hotel, a marina, housing, and commercial and office space. But the majority also emphasized that the government's power was legitimate because there was a deep public need and a well worked-out plan.

The right backlash

The lawyers for the homeowners came from the Institute for Justice, a libertarian legal group that is part of the property rights movement. Property rights advocates argue that much government regulation, from environmental laws to New Deal legislation, constitutes illegal "takings" of private property without compensation. "The [*Kelo*] opinion is written so that government can take property for anything it feels like," argued Institute for Justice attorney Dana Berliner. "With that decision we knew immediately there would be some sort of backlash."

There was, and it went far beyond the libertarian right. Some polls showed close to 90 percent of respondents hostile to using eminent domain for economic development, with a strong majority even critical of using eminent domain to build roads. Legislators in more than two dozen states are now planning legislation that would curb the power of state or local governments to take private property for any private economic development project (often with the sole exception in cases of "blight"). Members of Congress have introduced at least nine measures, including one denying federal funds to any local government that uses eminent domain for economic development.

The issue is pushed mainly by conservative Republicans and libertarian right groups like The Castle Coalition (an offshoot of the Institute for Justice). Grover Norquist, the influential right-wing strategist who heads Americans for Tax Reform, told *The Economist* that "twenty years from now, people will look back at *Kelo* the way people look back at *Roe v. Wade*," spawning a property rights movement as potent as the anti-abortion movement.

The left backlash

Critics of eminent domain abuse also exist on the left. Progressive politicians like Rep.

Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) have proposed restrictions on the use of eminent domain, and the *Kelo* homeowners case drew support from the NAACP, AARP and the respected urbanologist Jane Jacobs. Dating back to the Poletown case, the subject of a Michigan Supreme Court decision that the current state Supreme Court reversed last year, consumer advocate Ralph Nader has also criticized local governments for abusing their power to transfer property of homeowners and small businesses to big corporations.

It's easy to find egregious cases, like the effort by Atlantic City to take one woman's house to provide limousine parking for Donald Trump (a move blocked by the courts), or, only slight less outrageous, the current attempt of Long Branch, New Jersey, to use eminent domain to clear existing waterfront homes in order to build higher-priced homes. In decades past, cities typically used their eminent domain powers for dubious urban renewal projects—often labeled "Negro removal"—such as the destruction of Boston's West End working class Italian community for luxury housing or Robert Moses' massive transformation of many neighborhoods in New York City, especially in the Bronx.

Often the use of eminent domain is combined with tax breaks and other public subsidies for factories, warehouses, Wal-Mart and other big box retailers, and stadiums for private sports teams—like the subsidies and eminent domain powers used to build a stadium for George W. Bush's Texas Rangers. As Greg LeRoy makes clear in his new book, *The Great American Jobs Scam*, the public benefits of these private developments are frequently exaggerated, and corporations often take the tax breaks and fail to live up to expectations—or even leave.

Defenders of the use of eminent domain for economic development point to successful big projects, like Baltimore's Inner Harbor, or unusual smaller-scale projects, like Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a neighborhood nonprofit group that used the city's powers of eminent domain to redevelop a blighted, poor neighborhood. And even though eminent domain should be the last resort, it is often necessary to avoid a single hold-out from blocking a worthy public purpose.

But the property rights movement sees all uses of eminent domain for economic development as abuse. It has an absolutist view of property and a desire for minimalist government, but government creates property rights, which are always conditional

and limited. The movement also makes no distinction between rights of homeowners and those of big corporations.

Distinctions with differences

It's possible to reform the use of eminent domain without adopting the property rights movement strategy. First, there's a need to recognize that local governments are driven towards the abuse of eminent domain because of current urban policy. Sprawl often drains resources from central cities, and the lack of both metropolitan revenue sharing and federal urban financial aid (typical in most of Europe) leads local governments to seek revenues by raising the value of their real estate—thus displacing modest homes and businesses. Also, cities often mistakenly pursue large-scale land clearance projects, pushed by developers and corporations, rather than encourage economic growth with infrastructure development that respects the existing built environment, trains its workforce and builds on existing assets.

The process of using eminent domain for economic development is in need of reform, such as more extensive and democratic planning (especially from the affected neighborhood), more rigorous demonstration of the public benefits that should be the plan's primary objective (not simply increased tax revenue or the private benefit of a new owner), and both public regulation of the project and binding contracts for private performance.

Finally, as Nader has argued, there's a need to recognize that not all property, nor all uses of eminent domain, are equal. Special safeguards are needed against abuses in transfers from the economically and politically weak to the wealthy and powerful, and it must be recognized that people's homes are a different type of property from a Wal-Mart store. Homes are often not just expressions of property interests but of personal liberty and autonomy, as well as freedom of association, that deserve more protection (and above-market compensation).

The libertarian right, which is at odds on this issue with the big-business conservatives who benefit from eminent domain and tax breaks, clearly hopes that it can ride this issue into battle against all regulatory restrictions on property rights. The left must do more than simply join the opposition to the misuse of government power on behalf of corporate interests against homeowners and small businesses. It needs to pursue comprehensive reforms that preserve essential powers of local governments but make them better serve the needs of their citizens. ■

Reckoning with the God Squad

Fundamentalist bullies cannot be appeased. They must be confronted.

BY BILL MOYERS

AT THE CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH in Marshall, Texas, where I was baptized in the faith, we believed in a free church in a free state. I still do.

My spiritual forbears did not take kindly to living under theocrats who embraced religious liberty for themselves but denied it to others. “Forced worship stinks in God’s nostrils,” thundered the dissenter Roger Williams as he was banished from Massachusetts for denying Puritan authority over his conscience. Baptists there were a “pitiful negligible minority” but they were agitators for freedom and therefore denounced as “incendiaries of the commonwealth” for holding to their belief in that great democracy of faith—the priesthood of all believers.

Such revolutionary ideas made the new nation with its Constitution and Bill of Rights “a haven for the cause of conscience.” No longer would “the loathsome combination of church and state”—as Thomas Jefferson described it—be the settled order. The First Amendment neither inculcates religion nor inoculates against it. Americans could be loyal to the Constitution without being hostile to God, or they could pay no heed to God without fear of being mugged by an official God Squad. It has been a remarkable arrangement that guaranteed “soul freedom.”

It is at risk now, and the fourth observance of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is an appropriate time to think about it.

Four years ago, the poet’s prophetic metaphor became real again and “the great dark birds of history” plunged into our lives.

They came in the name of God. They came bent on murder and martyrdom.

Yes, the Koran speaks of mercy and compassion and calls for ethical living. But such passages are no match for the ferocity of instruction found there for waging war for God’s sake: “Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of Evil.”

So the holy warriors came—an airborne death cult, their sights on God’s enemies: regular folks, starting the day’s routine one minute and in the next, engulfed by a hor-

rendous cataclysm.

But it is never only the number of dead by which terrorists measure their work. It is also the number of the living—the survivors—taken hostage to fear. The writer Terry Tempest Williams has said “the human heart is the first home of democracy.” Fill that heart with fear and people will give up the risks of democracy for the assurances of security. Fill that heart with fear and you can shake the house to its foundations.

Having lost faith in all else, zealots have nothing left but a holy cause to please a warrior God. They win if we become holy warriors, too; if we kill the innocent as they do; strike first at those who had not struck us; allow our leaders to use the fear of terrorism to make us afraid of the truth; cease to think and reason together, allowing others to tell what’s in God’s mind. Yes, we are vulnerable to terrorists, but only a shaken faith in ourselves can do us in.

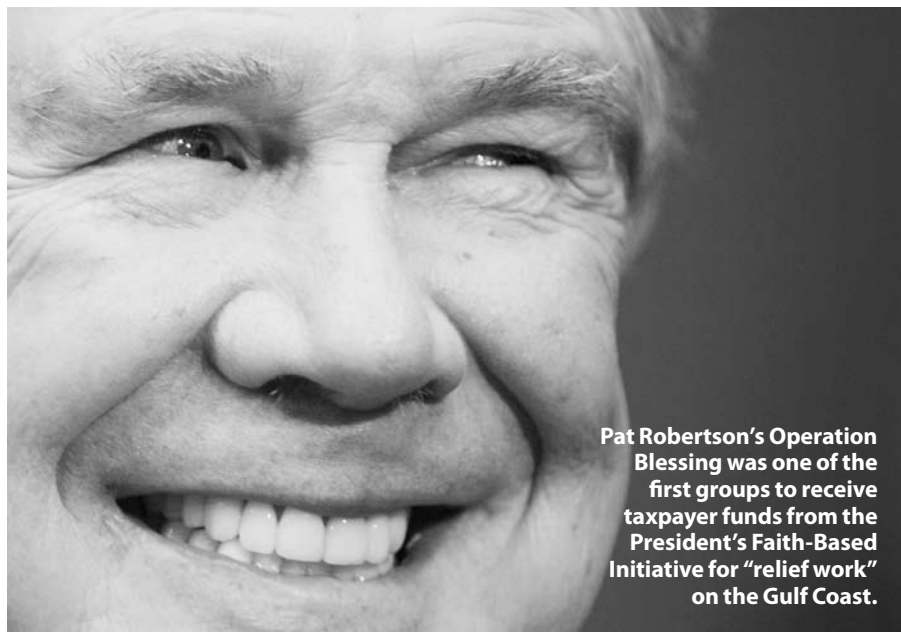
MUSLIMS HAVE NO MONOPOLY ON HOLY violence. As Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, an assistant professor of Justice and Peace Studies at University of St. Thomas, points out, God’s violence in the sacred texts of both faiths reflects a deep and troubling pathology “so pervasive, vindictive and destructive” that it contradicts and subverts the collective weight of other passages that exhort ethical behavior or testify to a loving God.

We know we can go through the Bible and construct a God more pleasing to the better angels of our nature. We also know that the “violence-of-God” tradition remains embedded deep in the DNA of monotheistic faith. Inside that logic you cannot read part of the Bible allegorically and the rest of it literally. If you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, and the depiction of the Great Judgment at the end times you must also believe that God is sadistic, brutal, vengeful, callow, cruel and savage—that God slaughters.

Let’s go back to 9/11 four years ago. The ruins were still smoldering when the reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell went on television to proclaim that the terrorist

attacks were God’s punishment of a corrupted America. They said the government had adopted the agenda “of the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians,” not to mention the ACLU and People For the American Way. (The God of the Bible apparently holds liberals in the same low esteem as Hittites and Gergushites and Jebusites and all the other pagans of holy writ.) Critics said such comments were degraded. But millions of Christian fundamentalists and conservatives didn’t think so. They thought Robertson and Falwell were being perfectly consistent with the logic of the Bible as they read it: God withdraws favor from sinful nations—the terrorists were meant to be God’s wake-up call: better get right with God. Not many people at the time seemed to notice that Osama bin Laden had also been reading his sacred book closely and literally, and had called on Muslims to resist what he described as a “fierce Judeo-Christian campaign” against Islam, praying to Allah for guidance “to exalt the people who obey Him and humiliate those who disobey Him.”

Suddenly we were immersed in the pathology of a “holy war” as defined by fundamentalists on both sides. You could see this pathology play out in General William Boykin. As a member of the U.S. military, Boykin had taken up with a small group called the Faith Force Multiplier whose members apply military principles to evangelism with a manifesto summoning warriors “to the spiritual warfare for souls.” In uniform, Boykin attended evangelical revivals preaching that America was in a holy war as “a Christian nation” battling Satan and that America’s Muslim adversaries will be defeated “only if we come against them in the name of Jesus.” For such an hour, America surely needed a godly leader. So General Boykin explained how it was that the candidate who had lost the election in 2000 nonetheless wound up in the White House. President Bush, he said, “was not elected by a majority of the voters—he was appointed by God.” Not surprising, instead of being reprimanded for evangelizing while in uniform, General Boykin is now



Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing was one of the first groups to receive taxpayer funds from the President's Faith-Based Initiative for "relief work" on the Gulf Coast.

the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. (Just as it isn't surprising that despite his public call for the assassination of a foreign head of state, Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing was one of the first groups to receive taxpayer funds from the President's Faith-Based Initiative for "relief work" on the Gulf Coast.)

We can't wiggle out of this. We're talking about a powerful religious constituency that claims the right to tell us what's on God's mind and to decide the laws of the land according to their interpretation of biblical revelation and to enforce those laws on the nation as a whole. For the Bible is not just the foundational text of their faith; it has become the foundational text for a political movement.

THE RADICAL RELIGIOUS RIGHT HAS SUCCEEDED in taking over one of America's great political parties—the country is not yet a theocracy but the Republican Party is—and they are driving American politics, using God as a battering ram on almost every issue: crime and punishment, foreign policy, health care, taxation, energy, regulation, social services and so on.

They have brought intensity, organization and anger to the public square. They use the language of faith to demonize political opponents, mislead and misinform voters, censor writers and artists, ostracize dissenters, and marginalize the poor. These are the foot soldiers in a political holy war financed by wealthy economic interests and guided by savvy partisan operatives who know that couching political ambition in religious rhetoric can ignite the passion of followers.

In recent weeks a movement called the

Ohio Restoration Project has been launched to identify and train thousands of "Patriot Pastors" to get out the conservative religious vote next year. According to press reports, the leader of the movement—the senior pastor of a large church in suburban Columbus—casts the 2006 elections as an apocalyptic clash between "the forces of righteousness and the hordes of hell." The fear and loathing in his message is palpable: He denounces public schools that won't teach creationism, allow teachers to read the Bible in class or allow children to pray. He rails against the "secular jihadists" who have "hijacked" America and prevent school kids from learning that Hitler was "an avid evolutionist." He blasts the "pagan left" for trying to redefine marriage. He declares that "homosexual rights" will bring "a flood of demonic oppression." On his church Web site you read, "Reclaiming the teaching of our Christian heritage among America's youth is paramount to a sense of national destiny that God has invested into this nation."

The corporate, political and religious right have converged, led by a president who, in his own disdain for science, reason and knowledge, is the most powerful fundamentalist in American history. And radicals on the Christian right are now the dominant force in America's governing party. They control much of the U.S. government and are on the verge of having it all. Without them the government would not be in the hands of people who don't believe in government. They are culpable in upholding a system of class and race in which, as we saw last week, the rich escape and the poor are left behind. And they

are on a crusade against government "of, by, and for the people" in favor of one based on biblical authority. So the Grand Old Party—the GOP—has become God's Own Party, its ranks made up of God's Own People "marching as to war."

It has to be said that their success has come in no small part because of our acquiescence and timidity. Our democratic values are imperiled because too many people of reason are willing to appease irrational people just because they are pious. Republican moderates tried appeasement and survive today only in gulags set aside for them by the Karl Roves, Bill Fristis and Tom DeLays. Democrats are divided and paralyzed, afraid that if they take on the organized radical right they will lose what little power they have.

As I look back on the conflicts and clamor of our boisterous past, one lesson about democracy stands above all others: Bullies—political bullies, economic bullies and religious bullies—cannot be appeased; they have to be opposed with a stubbornness to match their own. This is never easy—these guys don't fight fair. "Robert's Rules of Order" is not one of their holy texts. But freedom on any front—and especially freedom of conscience—never comes to those who rock and wait, hoping someone else will do the heavy lifting.

Christian realism requires us to see the world as it is, without illusions, and then take it on. Christian realism also requires love. But not a sentimental, dreamy love. Reinhold Niebuhr, who taught at Union Theological Seminary and wrestled constantly with applying Christian ethics to political life, put it this way: "When we talk about love we have to become mature or we will become sentimental. Basically love means ... being responsible, responsibility to our family, toward our civilization, and now by the pressures of history, toward the universe of humankind."

Christian realists aren't afraid to love. But just as the Irishman who came upon a brawl in the street and asked, "Is this a private fight or can anyone join in?," we have to take that love where the action is. Or the world will remain a theater of war between fundamentalists. ■

BILL MOYERS is a broadcast journalist and former host of the PBS program "NOW With Bill Moyers." He also serves as president of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy. This article was adapted from a recent address at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where Judith and Bill Moyers received the seminary's highest award, the Union Medal, for their contributions to faith and reason in America.

A Fundamental History Lesson

The rise of National Socialism proved politics and religion don't mix.

BY FRITZ STERN

TO HAVE WITNESSED EVEN AS A child the descent in Germany from decency to barbarism gave the question "how was it possible" an existential immediacy. So I have wrestled with that question, tried to reconstruct some parts of the past and perhaps intuit some lessons.

The German-speaking refugees who came to this country in the '30s had enthusiastic feelings about the United States. Not only gratitude for saving them, giving many a chance for a new start, if often under harsh circumstances, but love and admiration for a country that was, when they arrived, still digging itself out from an unprecedented depression, under a leader whose motto was, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," unlike his German contemporary, who preached fear in order to exploit it.

The United States was the sole functioning democracy of the '30s—that "low, dishonest decade"—and under Franklin Delano Roosevelt it was committed to pragmatic reform and in inimitable high spirits. No, I haven't forgotten the unpleasant elements of those days—the injustices, the right-wing radicals, the anti-Semites—but the dominant note of Roosevelt's era was ebullient affirmation of reform and progress.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GENERALIZE ABOUT German Jews in the modern era, but common to most of them was an earlier deep affection for their country, its language and its culture. Perhaps they loved not wisely, but too well. I remember from my childhood the decent Germans, so-called Aryans, who being opponents of the Nazi regime disappeared into concentration camps after 1933. The ties between us had been close, and when they were broken, when so many Germans decided they didn't want to know what was happening to their Jewish or "non-Aryan" neighbors, when they denied their common past, the pain was deep.

It is appropriate to recall poet Heinrich Heine's thought—that Jews are like the people they live among, only more so. Hence

German Jews, who came in great variety—orthodox, liberal, secular, converted—were like Germans only more so: ambitious, talented, disciplined and full of ambivalence.

After their civic emancipation in the nineteenth century, German Jews made an unprecedented leap to achievement, prominence and wealth within only three generations, but some special insecurity and vulnerability clung to them, as it did to many Germans. I remember finding in an obscure book Disraeli's confession to young Montefiore: "You and I belong to a race that can do everything but fail."

Now many Germans regret the absence of that creative complicated element of German Jewry. They recall the inestimable contributions that Jews made to German life and culture in their century of partial emancipation. But their forbears had more complicated feelings on the subject, and even the most successful Jews felt, as Walter Rathenau once said, "there comes a moment in every Jew's life when he realizes he is a second-class citizen."

Perhaps that strange mixture of German hospitality and hostility to Jews evoked the ambivalent response of some of the greatest of German Jews. They were the brilliant diagnosticians of German-European hypocrisy, the memorable breakers of taboos: think of Heine's mockery of German sentimental pretense, of Karl Marx's insistence that the cash nexus trumps virtue, or of Sigmund Freud's exposure of sexual hypocrisy and falsehood. Disturbers of a false peace are indispensable but rarely welcomed.

So anti-Semitism, which comes in many guises and degrees, existed in pre-1914 Germany, as it did more ferociously in other countries. In Germany, it became an all-consuming political weapon only after the Great War.

IT IS NOW CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT the First World War and its senseless, unimaginable slaughter was the Ur-catastrophe of the last century.

It brutalized a Europe that before 1914, though deeply flawed by injustice and arro-

gance, also contained the promise of great emancipatory movements, championing the demands for social justice, for equality, for women's emancipation, for all of human rights. The war radicalized Europe; without it, there would have been no Bolshevism and no Fascism. In the postwar climate and in the defeated and self-deceived Germany, National Socialism flourished and ultimately made it possible for Hitler to establish the most popular, the most murderous, the most seductive and the most repressive regime of the last century.

But the rise of National Socialism was neither inevitable nor accidental. It did have deep roots, but the most urgent lesson to remember is that it could have been stopped. This is but one of the many lessons contained in modern German history, lessons that should not be squandered in cheap and ignorant analogies. A key lesson is that civic passivity and willed blindness were the preconditions for the triumph of National Socialism, which many clear-headed Germans recognized at the time as a monstrous danger and ultimate nemesis.

We who were born at the end of the Weimar Republic and who witnessed the rise of National Socialism are left with that all-consuming, complex question: How could this horror have seized a nation and corrupted so much of Europe? We should remember that even in the darkest period there were individuals who showed active decency, who, defying intimidation and repression, opposed evil and tried to ease suffering. I wish these people would be given a proper European memorial—not to appease our conscience but to summon the courage of future generations.

Let's consider not the banality of evil but its triumph in a deeply civilized country. After the Great War and Germany's defeat, conditions were harsh and Germans were deeply divided between moderates and democrats on the one hand and fanatic extremists of the right and the left on the other. National Socialists portrayed Germany as a nation that had been betrayed



Hitler greets Archbishop Cesare Orsenigo, the papal nuncio, in Berlin on New Year's Day, 1935.

or stabbed in the back by socialists and Jews; they portrayed Weimar Germany as a moral-political swamp; they seized on the Bolshevik-Marxist danger, painted it in lurid colors and stoked people's fear in order to pose as saviors of the nation. In the late '20s a group of intellectuals known as conservative revolutionaries demanded a new volkish authoritarianism, a Third Reich. Richly financed by corporate interests, they denounced liberalism as the greatest, most invidious threat, and attacked it for its tolerance, rationality and cosmopolitan culture. These conservative revolutionaries were proud of being prophets of the Third Reich—at least until some of them were exiled or murdered by the Nazis when the latter came to power. Throughout, the Nazis vilified liberalism as a semi-Marxist-Jewish conspiracy and, with Germany in the midst of unprecedented depression and immiseration, they promised a national rebirth.

Twenty years ago, I wrote about "National Socialism as Temptation," about what it was that induced so many Germans to embrace the terrifying specter. There were many reasons, but at the top ranks Hitler himself, a brilliant populist manipulator who insisted and probably believed that Providence had chosen him as Germany's savior, that he was the instrument of Providence, a leader who was charged with executing a divine mission.

God had been drafted into national poli-

tics before, but Hitler's success in fusing racial dogma with a Germanic Christianity was an immensely powerful element in his electoral campaigns. Some people recognized the moral perils of mixing religion and politics, but many more were seduced by it. It was the pseudo-religious transfiguration of politics that largely ensured his success, notably in Protestant areas, where clergy shared Hitler's hostility to the liberal-secular state and its defenders, and were filled with anti-Semitic doctrine.

German moderates and German elites underestimated Hitler, assuming that most people would not succumb to his Manichean unreason; they didn't think that his hatred and mendacity could be taken seriously. They were proven wrong. People were enthralled by the Nazis' cunning transposition of politics into carefully staged pageantry, into flag-waving martial mass. At solemn moments the National Socialists would shift from the pseudo-religious invocation of Providence to traditional Christian forms: In his first radio address to the German people, 24 hours after coming to power, Hitler declared, "The National Government will preserve and defend those basic principles on which our nation has been built up. They regard Christianity as the foundation of our national morality and the family as the basis of national life."

To cite one example of the acknowledged appeal of unreason, Carl Friedrich von

Weizsaecker, Nobel-laureate in physics and a philosopher, wrote to me in the mid-'80s saying that he had never believed in Nazi ideology but that he had been tempted by the movement, which seemed to him then like "the outpouring of the Holy Spirit." On reflection, he thought that National Socialism had been part of a process that the National Socialists themselves hadn't understood. He may well have been right: The Nazis didn't realize that they were part of a historic process in which resentment against a disenchanted secular world found deliverance in the ecstatic escape of unreason. German elites proved susceptible to this mystical brew of pseudo-religion and disguised interest. The Christian churches most readily fell into line as well, though with some heroic exceptions.

MODERN GERMAN HISTORY OFFERS lessons in both disaster and recovery. The principal lesson speaks of the fragility of democracy, the fatality of civic passivity or indifference; German history teaches us that malice and simplicity have their own appeal, that force impresses and that nothing in the public realm is inevitable.

Another lesson is the possibility of reconstruction, for the history of the Federal Republic since World War II, a republic that is now 55 years old, exemplifies success despite its serious flaws and shortcomings. Postwar Germany made a democracy grow on what was initially uncongenial ground, when its people were still steeped in resentment and denial. American friendship supported that reconstruction, especially in its first decade.

I fear that an estrangement is now taking place. German acceptance of Western traditions has been the precondition for its gradual reconciliation with neighbors and former enemies. The German achievement is remarkable—but it too needs constant protection.

My hope is for a renewal on still firmer grounds of a trans-Atlantic community of liberal democracies. Every democracy needs a liberal fundament, a Bill of Rights enshrined in law and spirit, for this alone gives democracy the chance for self-correction and reform. Without it, the survival of democracy is at risk. Every genuine conservative knows this. ■

FRITZ STERN, University Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, is the author of *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*. This essay is adapted from a speech that he gave at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York last year.

- 34 Books: *Naphtale* brings Baghdad to America.
- 35 Movies: *Winter Soldier*—when we were psychopaths.
- 40 The silent beauty of Lynd Ward.



BY MARK ENGLER

Hook, Line and Suckers

In the past 15 years, the rise of cable news has spawned a class of pundits who are not leftists but play them on TV. As the watchdogs at Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting have documented, political talk shows offer “balance” by

routinely matching up representatives of the far right, like Pat Buchanan, with centrist Democrats and *New Republic* editors. Progressives can only watch in dismay as the terrain of real dissent crumbles like an eroding cliff off the left coast of political possibility.

This depressing trend has made it all the more refreshing to watch Barbara Ehrenreich’s well-earned rise to prominence. Long a fixture in social movement circles, Ehrenreich was politicized during the Vietnam War as a grad student pursuing her doctorate in biology. In the ’70s she, along with Deidre English, wrote some of the period’s important feminist texts on women’s health. Back then, Ehrenreich was known to readers of *Radical America*, *Monthly Review* and *In These Times* as an insightful analyst who controversially posited in a 1976 essay that a “Professional-Managerial Class,” situated

uneasily between labor and capital, could play a vital role in ushering forward socialist politics.

Ehrenreich’s journalistic efforts expanded, and she shared a National Magazine Award in 1980 for a *Mother Jones* article on the misdeeds of drug companies in the developing world. That, and the 1983 publication of *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, helped snag her regular assignments for the *New York Times Magazine*. It also paved the way for a column in *Time* magazine from 1991 to 1997.

Ehrenreich breached the mainstream with her politics intact, never furthering the *Big Chill* mythology by disassembling her feminism or awareness of class. A sharp and darkly comical polemicist, she once quipped in a *Time* essay on housework: “In our mothers’ day, the standards were cruel but clear ... The floors must be im-

maculate enough to double as plates, in case the guests prefer to eat doggie style. The kitchen counters should be clean enough for emergency surgery, should the need arise.”

Observation, humor and political analysis combined seamlessly in the 2001 book that completed Ehrenreich’s rise to popular acclaim. *Nickel and Dimed*, her undercover journey into the world of the working poor, has sold more than a million copies and remains high on the *New York Times*’ paperback bestseller list. It has made Ehrenreich about as close to a household name as a serious American writer can be.

While this is genuine cause for celebration, and while *Nickel and Dimed* has gone far in debunking the bipartisan consensus that the working poor have been doing just fine in the post-welfare era, readers like me still harbor some reservations about that breakthrough hit. Granted, Ehrenreich self-consciously disavows some of the more

already plenty of people who knew the landscape well.

Like a latter-day C. Wright Mills, Ehrenreich moves up the social ladder in her new book, *Bait and Switch*, which deals with the author’s own white-collar economic stratum. The setting is our country’s post-Internet-bubble recession and jobless recovery, an economic situation that has taken its toll on the professional middle class. In early 2003 the *New York Times Magazine* announced the arrival of a new echelon of the unemployed with a cover story that pictured an aging ex-dot-commer and noted, “This man used to make \$300,000 a year. Now he’s selling khakis.”

For Ehrenreich, such downwardly mobile professionals have special significance for our society, pointing “a rude finger in the face of the American dream.” These people “are the ones who ‘did everything right,’” she explains—taking degrees in business and finance and becoming corporate foot soldiers—only to find themselves “restructured” out of work by businesses that long ago abandoned the concept of loyalty to employees.

As in her previous book, Ehrenreich goes to check out the situation first-hand. She doctors up a résumé under her maiden name, Barbara Alexander, and presents herself on Internet job boards and at professional networking events as a public relations consultant looking for the stability of a corporate PR job.

After almost a year of effort, she fails to find one. This is perhaps unsurprising given that she rules out tapping anyone from her real-world social network for help. As she notes in her conclusion, “a normal job-seeker my age would have acquired a Rolodex of contacts to turn to when unemployment hit.” Without them, her

cover looks thin and her job prospects dim.

Yet if Barbara Alexander is not a fair case study, the other jobless professionals she meets are hardly poseurs. There’s John Piering, “a fifty-two-year-old laid-off IT professional with two small children,” who tries to save money by having his family use less air conditioning and who takes temp work moving furniture. And there is Leah, a former marketing executive who has found nothing but “survival jobs,” like cleaning apartments, since being laid off in 2001. “I am \$73,000 in debt and have \$16,000 until my credit cards are maxed out,” Leah explains. “So, I actually joke with people that I wouldn’t mind having my identity stolen.”

The real difficulty *Bait and Switch* faces when trying to win over readers is t

hat Ehrenreich rarely musters much human sympathy for her fellow job-seekers. She often comes across as more aloof than embedded. For the

most part, Ehrenreich presents her white-collar counterparts as unimaginative and pathetic. They are bitter at having been used and discarded by their business-world bosses, yet are too individualistic to organize in their collective self-interest. Ehrenreich even comes to dislike her own alter ego, Barbara Alexander, who is desperately self-promoting and short on dignity. Her pitiable descent complete, readers have no one left to root for.

That said, the book does several things very well. Ehrenreich slams the “transition industry”—made up of blow-hard career coaches, pricey résumé consultants and manipulative networking groups—that preys on the vulnerable unemployed. Even more incisively (extending her brilliant 1989 book, *Fear of Falling*, which described the unique anxieties that kept the professional middle class in timid self-isolation), she

Continued on page 37

Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream

By Barbara Ehrenreich
Metropolitan Books
256 pages, \$24.00

prurient aspects of cross-class “slumming.” (She has described her technique as a “desperate last-ditch attempt” to draw attention to poverty and notes in the book, “I’ve had enough unchosen encounters with poverty in my lifetime to know it’s not a place you would want to visit for touristic purposes.”) Still, there’s something inherently patronizing about the idea that you should pretend to be poor in order to write about it.

Ehrenreich herself has likened the “discovery” of poverty in the ’60s to Columbus’ “discovery” of America, noting that in each case there were

ART SPACE



The Invincible Cities
Web site (invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu) showcases explorations by documentary photographer and sociologist Camilo José Vergara, who returns to urban neighborhoods multiple times, sometimes over decades, to capture built environments as they age, decay, or are rejuvenated. The sign pictured here from Camden, N.J. is one of many images of the city that he took over 26 years, indexed through interactive timelines and maps and correlated to Census data.

BY MEGAN MARZ

Echoes of Baghdad

Naphtalene, the first novel by an Iraqi woman to be published in the United States, has taken a long time to arrive here.

A small Cairo press first published Alia Mamdouh's second novel in 1986, just a few years after her controversial first novel, *Leila and the Wolf*, provoked the Iraqi government to prohibit her from publishing her work there. For the next decade, *Naphtalene* was largely ignored. Then, in 1996, Jordanian scholar Fadia Faqir rescued it from obscurity by choosing it as part of Garnet Publishing's Arab Women Writers, a series of five novels translated into English and published in the United Kingdom. But not until this summer did a publisher—the Feminist Press at CUNY—bring *Naphtalene* to the United States.

But *Naphtalene*, a girl's coming-of-age tale written 20 years ago and set in '50s Baghdad, couldn't be more timely. Indeed, Americans reading the book for the first time in 2005 will find it difficult to avoid comparing the Baghdad of the novel to the more tumultuous Baghdad ever-present in the news. *Naphtalene* subjects one Baghdad neighborhood to the scrutiny of a child who observes its deepest divisions and secrets, providing a profoundly human portrayal of the city that makes it more real, in many ways, than a view through a plasma TV ever could.

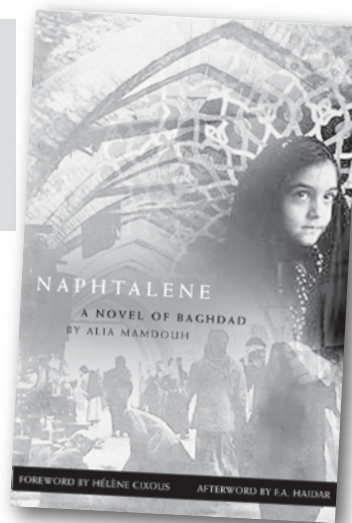
Nine-year-old Huda, who

Naphtalene: A Novel of Baghdad

By Alia Mamdouh
Feminist Press
224 Pages, \$23.95

narrates the novel, draws readers into her home in Baghdad's al-Adhamiyya neighborhood, unveiling the kind of complex family dynamic inaccessible to forms outside the novel. For instance, she remembers to herself in internal dialogue, "[Your brother] was the youngest, the prettiest, the plumpest, the most delicate. You used to divide the world between you and him. He was order, melancholy, and introspection. You were anarchy, insolence, and violence." The reflection prefigures the most deeply explored division within the families of *Naphtalene*: that between men and women.

True-to-life, *Naphtalene* depicts the division as complex and problematic for both sexes. The most prominent pairings—of Huda's parents and her Aunt Farida and Uncle Munir—are portrayed as brutal and oppressive to women (as indeed many 1950s Iraqi relationships were). "So let males marry females," Huda declares. "Let Farida, elec-



trified by her constant laziness and long mistakes, walk to Uncle Munir. Let her rock back and forth to the music if her head is bowed or her hand is bound. Let her swallow his saliva, his water, and his phlegm; let the first Farida disappear." Huda's graphic description of Farida's subjugation into nonexistence isn't the only suggestion of men as captors. Huda's violent father, Jamil, has an occupation that reinforces the stereotype: prison guard. The women, though, aren't necessarily trying to break free. Huda's mother, for one, is meekly obedient to Jamil until the moment he leaves her for another woman. And after Munir abandons Farida with little explanation, she sorrowfully

waits every day for his return.

But before Huda's watchful eyes, these characters, and their world, turn inside out. By the time Munir returns without warning, Farida has completely changed, and in one of the novel's most striking scenes, Huda's formerly ambivalent aunt gets mad: "She grabbed him by the shirt and brought him down to the floor as he kicked about. She gathered her rage and screamed, 'Even if I kill you with my own hands I won't be satisfied.' ... She got up and put the pillow over his face, sat on his chest ... and stripped him naked." In a similar power shift, Jamil, when his children visit him at the prison after a long separation, begins to sob. Later, denied a much-desired promotion because of his alcoholism, Jamil attempts suicide by setting himself on fire. His unraveling, like Farida's rage, is a powerful metaphor for the world's malleability.

Mamdouh also displays the malleability of Huda's world through the overlap of seemingly dissimilar images and sounds in the girl's mind. Pee hitting asphalt, for example, sounds to her like radio static. Similarly vivid images pepper the book. Sometimes, though, Mamdouh gets too caught up in Huda's descriptions, filling entire paragraphs with banal minutiae, like, "The boys and girls wore cheap clothes, and their shoes were scruffy. Their socks were uneven—one high, the other low."

Such trivialities, however, don't distract the reader from Huda's portrait of Baghdad as a place with a vibrant hold on the hearts and minds of its residents. And while the current bombings in Baghdad slide further and further back in the pages of our newspapers, in the hands of Mamdouh the city and its residents become—for a while, at least—inescapable. ■

MEGAN MARZ is a freelance writer based in Chicago.



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BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

When We Were Psychos

In 1969, news of the My Lai massacre hit the American press and gave the already-queasy stateside citizenry a shock to the system. Nothing in that tumultuous era evoked so terrifyingly the feeling that a line had been

crossed, from hopeful civilization to horrific monstrosity.

There was fallout of all varieties, but one of the most remarkable results was *eventus non grata* then and remained so for decades: the January, 1971 "Winter Soldier Investigations," held in a Detroit Howard Johnson conference room. ("The title is a reply to Thomas Paine's "times that try men's souls," when "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.") Organized by several antiwar organizations, the event was simple: More than 100 returned Vietnam veterans spoke in public, and for the media, about atrocities they'd witnessed and performed upon the peasant population of Southeast Asia. True to its leash, the

media didn't report on it, but a document was created nonetheless, a documentary made by an anonymous collective of 18 filmmakers. *Winter Soldier* was left undistributed, and shunned by the networks (although PBS reportedly broadcast it once late at night as a replacement program). While the war still raged, it only appeared in 1972 at the Whitney Museum in New York or at sporadic campus screenings. Then it vanished.

Now, Milestone Films, under its new offshoot Milliarium Zero, has disinterred this galvanizing broadsword. In what is effectively its first release, the film will play in more than 100 cities this year, and then get locked in DVD amber for the world to see. It is a simple, grainy, talking-heads documentary, but it is violently upsetting and required viewing.

Vietnam homefront experi-

Winter Soldier Directed by Anonymous

ence has come to be defined as the "living-room war," suggesting that we saw it all on our televisions, and that public exposure was part of the propulsion that caused the U.S. government to finally cease aggressions. But the testimony in *Winter Soldier* makes it clear that we actually saw very little—My Lai was no aberration, but a paradigm of U.S. activity, and what was de rigueur on the ground was largely kept from reporters' cameras.

The film's relentless first-person-witness assault echoes Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, demonstrating that being told can be more lacerating than being shown. We experience not only the atrocities but the shock

felt by the witnesses and the emotional venom still necrotizing their lives. No fiction film about Vietnam has ever come close to this movie's portrayal of American guilt and trauma. The chillingly calm speakers recount incidents that have made many walk out of the theater in a sickened swoon. But while we may weep for the broken heart of an American generation, the real remorse here is for the victims: Asian farmers mutilated and slaughtered as a kind of imperial bloodsport—tossed out of helicopters on a bet, disemboweled alive, thrown down wells with grenades, men, women and children, by the thousands.

One movie can only have so much impact, but it's tempting to imagine that if *Winter Soldier* had been properly screened in 1972, the war might've ended sooner, or, at least, Americans would know something they still apparently don't about the conflict, its costs, and the nature of their leadership. (A major at the time, Colin Powell came late to My Lai, officially excusing it and maintaining that American-Vietnamese relations were "excellent.") Most of all, they might've learned something about murder and butchery—that even when it happens to Asians far away, we're ultimately responsible for the bodies and rivers of blood.

Winter Soldier might've been the most important film of the Johnson-Nixon era, and yet it was effectively censored. Its release, 33 years too late, is also a few years overdue this decade. If only Milestone had dropped this payload on us in 2002, as the war machine was oiling up. Now, it's a film for the future—in an ideal and informed democracy, a *Winter Soldier* screening would be a voter registration requirement. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON is a film critic for the *Village Voice* and author of *One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train*.

New Orleans

Continued from page 21

ing to be surprised about. The disaster was the consequence of years of putting tax cuts above everything else—even above a catastrophe we knew was coming.

The aftermath

In the wake of Katrina, the D.C. political establishment has tried desperately to prevent any discussion of tax cuts and budget priorities as the culprits in the disaster.

At first, President Bush claimed, “I don’t think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees”—an insult to the experts in his own administration and elsewhere who had been warning about exactly that for years. When that line fell flat, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan did his best impression of Saddam Hussein’s information minister during the Iraq War, insisting, “Flood control has been a priority of this administration from day one.”

On Capitol Hill, Republicans simultaneously criticized those who were “playing politics” with the disaster, while pointing fingers at Democratic state and local officials.

Democrats—many of whom had voted for some of the Bush tax cuts—attacked the pathetic government response to the catastrophe, but largely refused to hammer the underlying tax and budget decisions that created the conditions for disaster. And the media ate it up, without putting any of it into the context of tax and budget decisions.

To be sure, even if the Bush administration had fully funded basic infrastructure improvements on the Gulf Coast, Hurricane Katrina would have caused serious damage. And most agree that the Army Corps of Engineers has in recent years made some very poor spending decisions, and that the agency is in need of reform.

However, it is downright criminal for Congress and the media to pretend that the Bush administration’s tax cut binge and subsequent budget cuts had nothing to do with the catastrophe. The fact is, experts roundly agree that had the administration made different budget decisions, the impact of the hurricane could have been reduced.

For instance, take Joseph Suhayda, an emeritus engineering professor at Louisiana State University who has worked for the Army Corps of Engineers. He told

the *Chicago Tribune* that the reason levees weren’t as high as they were designed to be “was a result of lack of funding.”

“I think they could have significantly reduced the impact [of Katrina] if they had those projects funded,” Suhayda told the *Tribune*. “If you need to spend \$20 million and you spend \$4 or \$5 million, something’s got to give.”

Similarly, Mike Parker told the *Washington Post*, “You have watched during a period of 72 hours a modern city of New Orleans [become] a Third World country, and it is all because of the disintegration of infrastructure.” He told the *Tribune* that “had [the infrastructure] been totally funded, there would be less flooding than you have.”

Sour grapes from a disgruntled ex-employee? It is echoed by the president’s current Army Corps chief. The Associated Press reported that Lt. Gen. Carl Strock “acknowledge[s] that more funding for the Southeast Louisiana Flood Control Project would allow the Corps to more quickly pump out the floodwaters inundating New Orleans.”

Some may try to argue that because of New Orleans’ sub-sea-level geography, there was no amount of funding or infrastructure improvements that could have protected the city. House Speaker Dennis Hastert foreshadowed this inane assertion when he callously questioned whether New Orleans should even be rebuilt. But that argument asks us to simply forget places like the Netherlands—one of the oldest industrialized countries in the world that has thrived right on the banks of the tempestuous North Sea, even though half of the country sits below sea level. After a powerful storm breached dikes there in 1953, the Dutch launched a massive project to upgrade its infrastructure. The Associated Press reported that the most critical piece of the project cost today’s equivalent of \$3.1 billion—one half of one percent of the tax cuts the Bush administration delivered to the richest 1 percent of America.

The difference between the Netherlands’ prudent investments and our government’s tax-cuts-before-everything policies can be seen in the most basic comparisons.

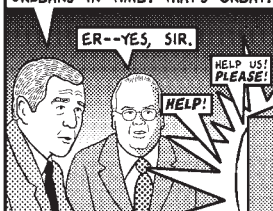
THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

WHAT WENT WRONG? A FEW POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

1) DUE TO A RARE MALADY FROM WHICH HE SUFFERS, GEORGE BUSH IS LITERALLY UNABLE TO SEE POOR BLACK AMERICANS.

SO EVERYONE GOT OUT OF NEW ORLEANS IN TIME! THAT’S GREAT!



2) IT WAS ALL A CLEVER PLOT ORCHESTRATED BY GROVER “DROWN IN THE BATHTUB” NORQUIST.

YOU SEE? I TOLD YOU THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN’T DO ANYTHING RIGHT!

BWAN HA HA HA HA!



3) ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS DIDN’T BELIEVE WHAT THEY WERE SEEING ON THE NEWS.

OH SURE, THE REPORTERS WERE YAMMERING ON ABOUT SUFFERING PEOPLE AND DYING BABIES AND SO ON--

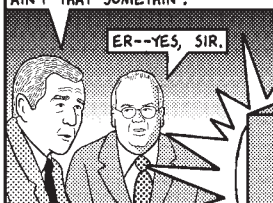
--BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU CAN’T TRUST THE LIBERAL MEDIA!



4) BUSH GOT CONFUSED AND THOUGHT HE WAS WATCHING THE NEWS FROM IRAQ.

AND SINCE EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN IRAQ IS BY DEFINITION GOOD NEWS--THERE’S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!

ALL THAT WATER--IN THE DESERT! AIN’T THAT SOMETHIN’!



5) OTHER PEOPLE ARE TO BLAME. MAYOR NAGIN INSISTED THAT EVERY FORM BE FILLED OUT IN TRIPPLICATE AND SUBMITTED THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS!

AND THE LOOTERS! WHAT WAS THE UNITED STATES MILITARY SUPPOSED TO DO IN THE FACE OF SUCH AN AWESOME ADVERSARY?



6) WRONG? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? NOTHING WENT WRONG.

OUR RESCUE TEAMS WERE ON THE SCENE WITH PLENTY OF FOOD AND WATER FOR EVERYONE--WITHIN MINUTES!

THAT’S OUR STORY AND WE’RE STICKING TO IT.

HECKUVA JOB, BROWNIE!



TOM TOMORROW © 2005 ... www.thismodernworld.com

USA Today reported that “few levees anywhere in the [United States] are built to more than a 100-year standard—capable of withstanding a flood so bad that its probability of occurring is once in a 100 years.” Better-funded Dutch levees, by contrast, are built to a 1,250-year standard. And while the Netherlands’ infrastructure is built to withstand some of the strongest storms, the *New York Times* reported in September 2005 that “Congress authorized a flood control system to handle only a Category 3 storm”—most likely to save on cost. Additionally, “as a result of federal budget constraints” (that came as the Bush administration was handing out ever-increasing numbers of tax breaks) the flood walls that broke during Katrina “were never tested” and never built to the strength experts made clear was necessary.

Still, even after Hurricane Katrina, none of these facts has shocked conservatives into reevaluating their tax cut zealotry. Instead, they continue to push forward with the insanity, as if nothing happened. In his first interview just days after the disaster, President Bush made sure to tell ABC’s Diane Sawyer that he will not consider rolling back his tax cuts to deal with the disaster or beef up infrastructure.

The next week, Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) reassured reporters that GOP plans to repeal the estate tax and pass a new \$70 billion series of tax cuts were only being postponed temporarily. “There’s plenty of time to do everything that we want to do,” he said—not a surprise coming from the same man who, just before the Iraq invasion said “Nothing is more important in the face of a war than cutting taxes.”

Make no mistake: This tax-cut-at-all-cost

orthodoxy is not supported by the public. Polls have consistently shown that a majority of Americans support rolling back tax cuts to deal with pressing national priorities. And yet, the political establishment now regularly makes passing tax cuts its sole objective.

If you think that is hyperbole, think again. New Orleans provides only one example of how tax cuts are routinely put ahead of the most pressing public priorities. For proof, just look at the *Detroit News*’ special report before the most recent presidential election. The newspaper reported that in 2004 alone, the richest 10 percent of Americans received tax cuts that were “twice as much as the government will spend on job training, \$6.2 billion; college Pell grants, \$12 billion; public housing, \$6.3 billion; low-income rental subsidies, \$19 billion; child care, \$4.8 billion; insurance for low-income children, \$5.2 billion; low-income energy assistance, \$1.8 billion; meals for shut-ins, \$180 million; and welfare, \$16.9 billion.”

And that prompts a critical question: When will this madness end? If a city submerged under water can’t shock the insulated political establishment into reevaluating its tax and budget priorities, what can?

The answer is patently clear: The only thing that can prompt a serious debate about taxes is a political opposition that is willing to step forward and draw the tax cut contrast—an opposition that has not yet coalesced. As *In These Times* goes to press, most high-profile Democrats have refused to explicitly connect the dots. Instead of explaining how Bush’s tax cuts contributed to the Katrina disaster, Democrats have proposed a blue-ribbon commission to investigate the government’s (albeit pathetic) re-

sponse—a position that buries the broader debate about priorities.

True, John Kerry did talk about repealing some of the Bush tax cuts during the 2004 campaign. And true, some Democratic voices, including Bill Clinton and even the conservative Democratic Leadership Council, have now started talking about repealing tax cuts to pay for reconstruction and upgrades to America’s infrastructure. But as yet there has been no coordinated campaign by the Democratic Party to intensely focus on tax cuts. Instead of calls for repealing the \$336 billion in additional tax cuts that will go to the richest 5 percent of Americans in the next five years, most Democrats have mustered only a call for a delay in new tax cuts—something the GOP agreed to temporarily, but will ignore in a matter of weeks.

These split-the-difference tactics—which have marked the party’s electoral decline over the last decade—are once again preventing the party from explaining how Democratic leadership would lead to vastly different results for America.

Politicians love to put signs up next to the projects they created saying “your tax dollars at work.” The only way for the United States to have the desperately needed debate over budget priorities is if Democrats find the courage to plant a figurative sign in New Orleans’ flood-drenched streets that says “your tax cuts at work.” Then, and only then, will America’s tax debate transform from a theoretical one that features terrific-sounding promises into a concrete one that highlights the very real consequences of a political system that seeks only to enrich the already rich, no matter what the cost to society. ■

Ehrenreich

Continued from page 33

pinpoints the peculiar business psychology that blames jobless professionals for their own misfortune. She describes a world where support-group leaders, management gurus and self-help books counsel that individual optimism and “personality” can triumph over a dysfunctional economy.

“[F]rom the point of view of the economic ‘winners,’” she writes, “the view that one’s fate depends entirely on oneself

must be remarkably convenient.” Beyond self-congratulation, this view serves to keep aspirants in line, for “if you can achieve anything through your own mental efforts ... there is no need to confront the social and economic forces shaping your life.”

While *Bait and Switch* ends up being Ehrenreich’s most dour portrait yet of the Professional-Managerial Class, it does not appear that she has abandoned all hope. The very project of dissecting business’ insidious ideology constitutes a form of apologetics. It’s an exploration of what an

old Marxist might call “false consciousness”—something more regularly discussed with regard to red state working families than mid-level business managers trained to identify passionately with their employers. But after 30 years of corporate indifference to their well-being, maybe it’s time for those downsized managers to begin rethinking their loyalties. ■

MARK ENGLER, a writer based in New York City, can be reached via the Web site www.democracyuprising.com.

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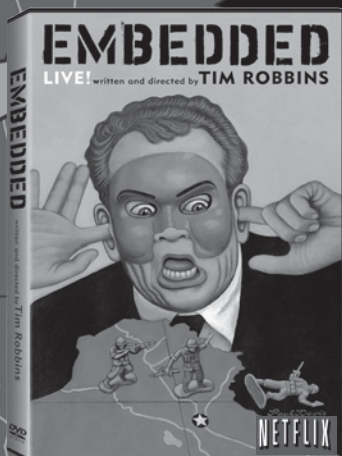
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Silent Beauty

Continued from backpage

that forbade Ward to do anything but sketch during Sunday afternoons.

If Ward's political outlook was Midwestern radicalism, European expressionism was his artistic vision. Like so many art students of his time, he dutifully set off for a year in Europe, fortunately spending 1927 not in the cafes of Paris, but in Leipzig, which swirled with a long tradition of German printmaking and the recent blossoming of Weimar cultural politics. Ward, who possessed only a few words of phrasebook German, may have been particularly attuned to the possibilities of visual communication in the work of radical printmakers such as Käthe Kollwitz and the Belgian artist Frans Masereel, who crafted the first wordless novels.

Returning to the United States, Ward published *Gods' Man* (1929), the first woodcut novel in the United States. The book's subject matter—an allegorical fable about an artist who sells his soul for worldly success—was timeless. But its artistic innovations were unprecedented; its visual structure and pacing owed as much to silent film and mass-circulation comic pages as they did to artistic predecessors like Kollwitz or Honoré Daumier. Wordless novels were political interventions, too, meant to take advantage of what Ward called the “great asset of the book's thousandfold duplication of contact with people.” Ward wanted to get art out of stuffy museums and snooty galleries and into the hands of an international community of readers who shared the language of images.

Gods' Man appeared in bookstores the week of the 1929 stock market crash. As the Depression settled in New York City, Ward's vision grew increasingly more engaged; his work tackled unemployment, poverty and exploitation. In *Madman's Drum* (1930), *Wild Pilgrimage* (1932) and *Vertigo* (1937), his political vision grew more forthright. Even while cushioned from financial crisis by his family, Ward labored to organize artists politically. He founded the Equinox Cooperative Press, an illustrators' collaborative dedicated to noncommercial work, and the American Artists Union. In addition to convening artists' congresses, Ward later helped shepherd the group into the CIO.

As the New York art world swirled with political controversy in the '30s, Ward steered a middle course between the rigidity of Communism and the apathy of art for art's sake. “[I]t was impossible,” he

recalled, “for anyone, artist or not, to remain ignorant of the fact that the world was in trouble.” A quintessential fellow traveler, he joined one organization after another, signing every social justice petition that came along, devoted more to the urgency of an issue than the orthodoxy of an ideology. But, he lamented, “every dose of medicine seemed only to aggravate the situation.” His moderation showed too in his work. Ward—ever the wood engraver—patiently carved out his vision while fellow artists like William Gropper pounded tables with fists, demanding that art serve the revolution. In an age of agitprop and socialist realism, he never turned his vision into a cartoon.

The Cold War, though, would cast a dismal shadow over the art world. The romance surrounding '50s Abstract Expressionism still obscures how ruthlessly the politically engaged artists of the Depression era were silenced—an effort the art world participated in with the vigor of a Congressional committee. Many artists found it nearly impossible to earn commissions or secure gallery spaces. Senator Joseph McCarthy summoned some artists, among them Ward's old ally William Gropper, to Washington.

As pages piled up in his FBI file, Ward turned away from explicitly political art. But a closer look suggests that Ward had not abandoned his commitment to social justice. In the popular children's novel *Johnny Tremain* (1943), Ward, in collaboration with the book's author Esther Forbes, told his story of the American Revolution as a populist narrative at the height of the Cold War. Readers may be tempted to read just a bit much into the redness of *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge*, one of Ward's most beloved works. For once, they might be right.

Recent years have restored Ward's reputation, turning him into a patron saint of illustrators and graphic novelists. Ward's admirers include Will Eisner, who has credited Ward for establishing a “historical precedent for modern graphic storytelling,” and Eric Drooker, whose 1992 work *Flood!*, helped usher graphic novels into the mainstream of American literature. But Lynd Ward's work was never really lost: A young Allen Ginsberg pulled *Gods' Man* from his family's bookshelf, and in 1955 transformed the book's images into his epic *Howl*. Even when Ward himself was silenced, his images continued to speak a thousand words. ■

CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA teaches history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



silent beauty

BY CHRISTOPHER CAROZZOLA

Lynd Ward used to joke that he was destined to be an artist because his last name spelled “draw” backwards—a curious statement from a man whose contributions to the visual arts deliberately repudiated words. Now recognized as one of the founders of the American graphic novel, Ward used to be better known as a fixture of progressive cultural politics in Depression-era New York City. In this, the centenary of his birth, Ward’s fans are celebrating both his visual innovations and the passion for social justice that suffused his silent novels.

Ward inherited his political worldview from his father, the radical minister Harry F. Ward, who worked in Chicago’s settlement house movement at the turn of the century and helped found the ACLU in 1920. He also wrote and preached about the virtues of the U.S.S.R. as the embodiment of Christ’s teachings on Earth, long after the Soviet experiment’s vices had become apparent. Ward, though, was no red-diaper baby. The family home was littered with Methodist sermons, not social manifestoes, and it was ascetic Protestantism rather than Marxist discipline

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